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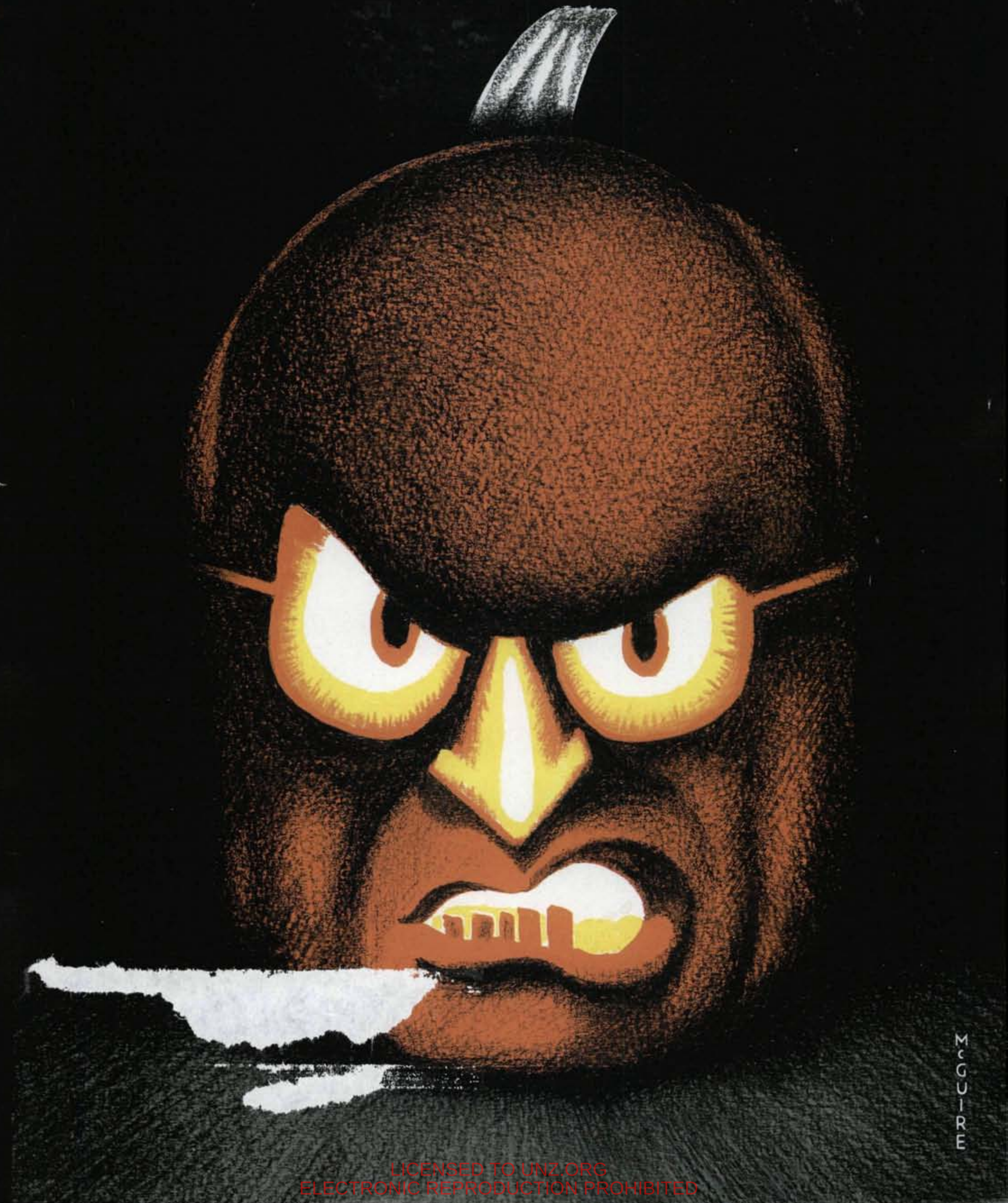
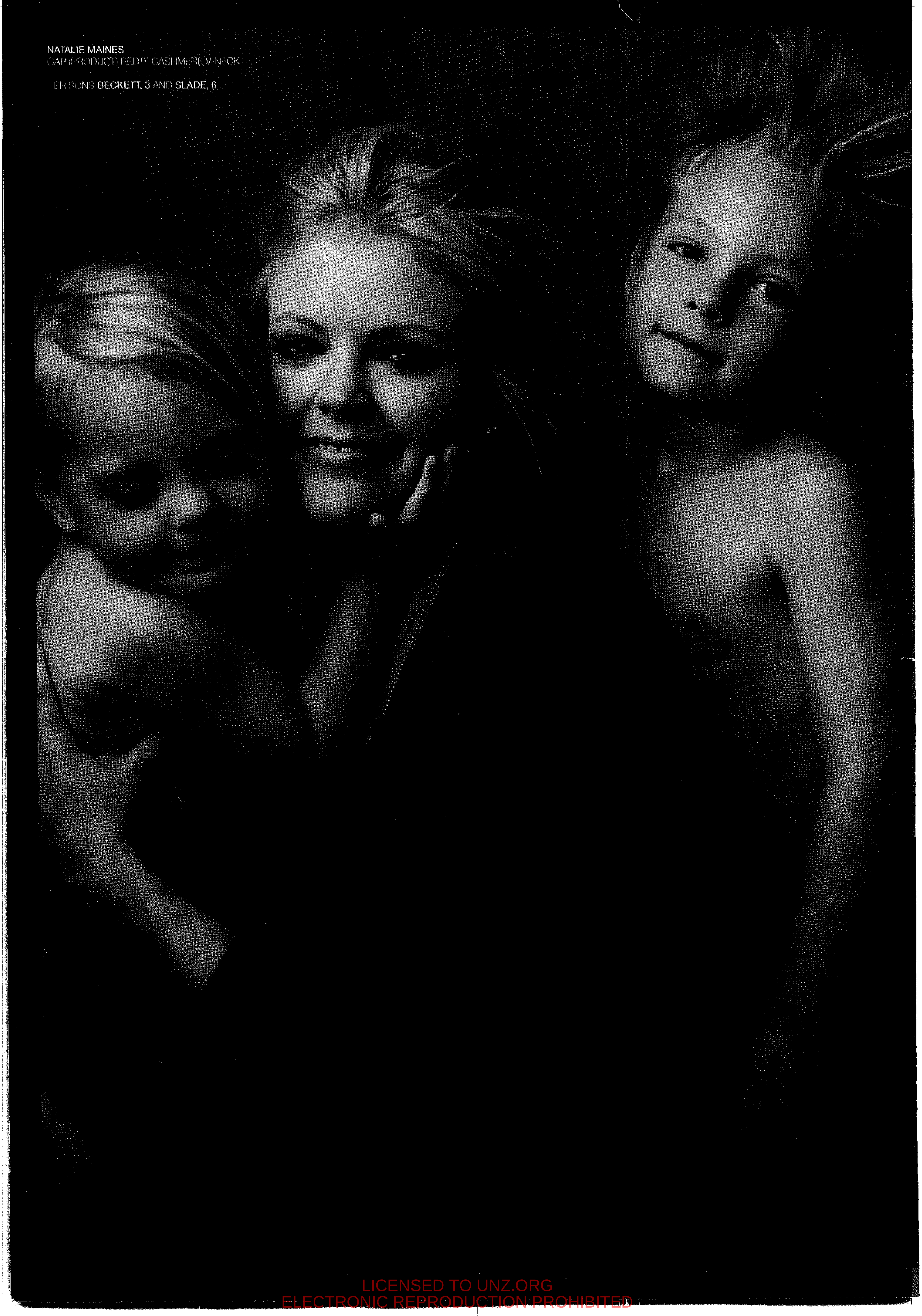
THE NEW YORKER

OCT. 29, 2007





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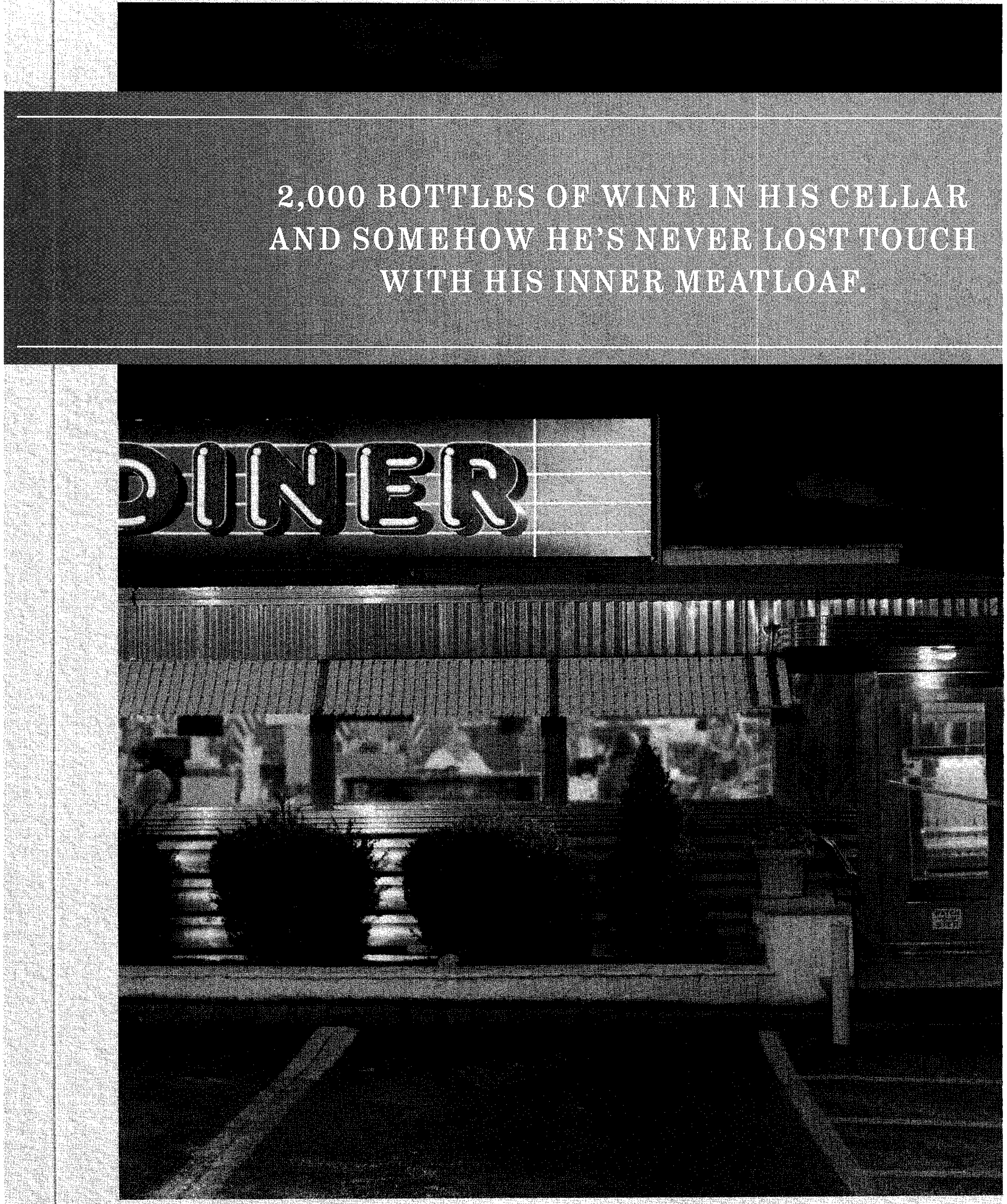
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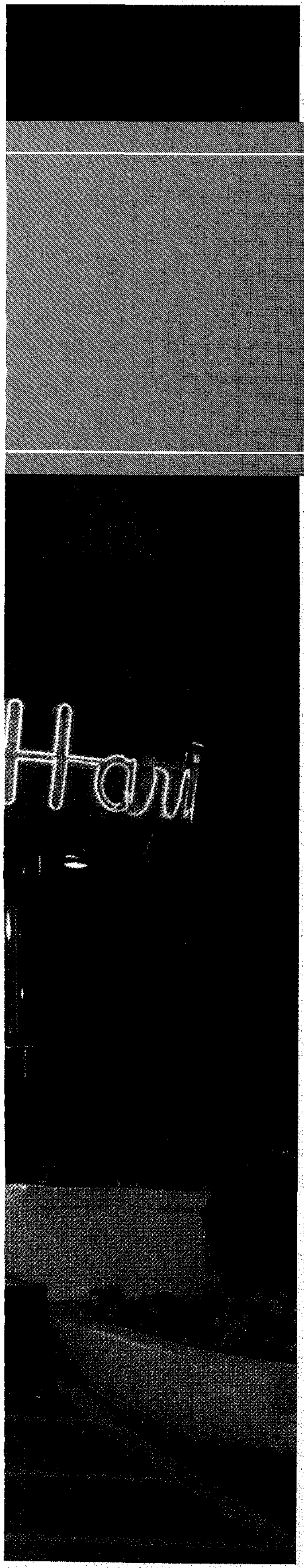

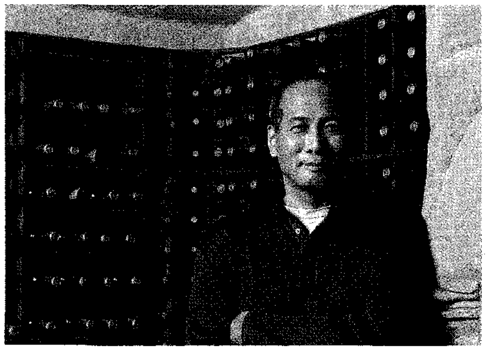

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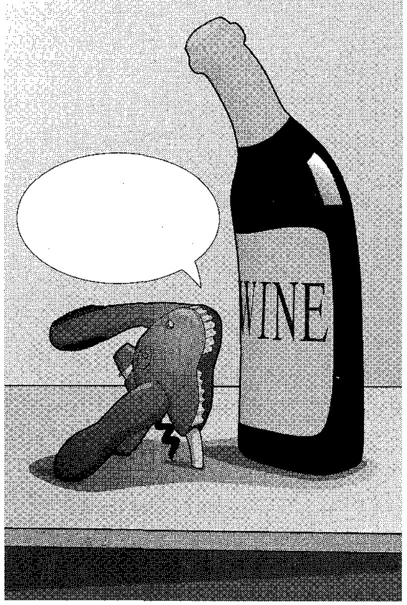
What did the Rabbit say to the wine bottle?



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Bed Bath & Beyond, Beverages & More, Carson Pirie Scott, Corkscrew.com, Crate & Barrel, IWAwine.com, Fortunoff, Macy's, Sur La Table, Total Wine & More.

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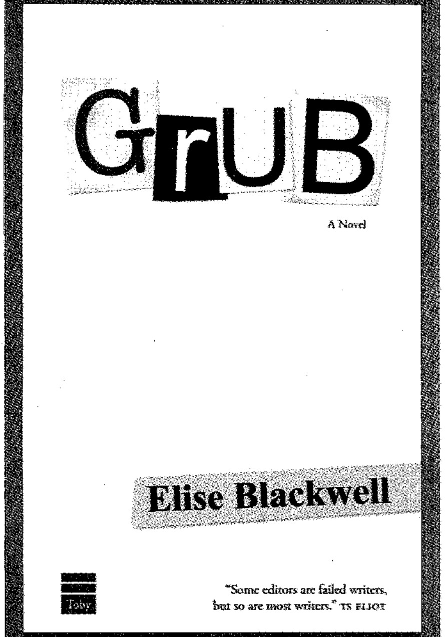
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Ian Frazier (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 46) will publish "Lamentations of the Father," a collection of humor pieces, in May.

Steve Martin ("In the Bird Cage," p. 48) is the author of the memoir "Born Standing Up: A Comic's Life," which comes out next month.

Judith Thurman (The Talk of the Town, p. 37) is a staff writer. "Cleopatra's Nose" is her latest book.

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Bill Buford ("Extreme Chocolate," p. 68) writes about food and drink for the magazine. His book, "Heat," about his adventures in restaurant kitchens, is out in paperback.

Ben McGrath ("The Extortionist," p. 56) is a staff writer.

Mark Ulriksen (Illustration, p. 57) has illustrated two children's books, "Dog Show" and "The Biggest Parade," with words by Elizabeth Winthrop.

Charles Wright (Poem, p. 74) received a Pulitzer Prize in 1998 for his poetry collection "Black Zodiac." His book-length poem "Littlefoot" was published in June.

John Burnside (Fiction, p. 80) has a new novel, "The Devil's Footprints," coming out in January.

Jill Lepore (Books, p. 88) is a professor of history at Harvard. She is the author of "New York Burning." "Blindspot," her first novel, written jointly with Jane Kamensky, is due out next year.

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THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM

James Surowiecki explains why politicians still rely on the supply-side myth. / *Ryan Lizza* talks about Mitt Romney. / An audio excerpt from *Steve Martin's* memoir. / Photographs of the cacao trade in Bahia. / *Sasha Frere-Jones* sorts through reactions to his indie-rock article. / Blogs by Hendrik Hertzberg, George Packer, and Dana Goodyear. / From the archives: *John McPhee* on chocolate, *Ben McGrath* on A-Rod, and thousands of book and film reviews. / Video from The New Yorker Festival. / Animated cartoons, the caption contest, and a list of *New Yorker* events around the country.

THE MAIL

BIBLE STUDY

James Wood finds Robert Alter's new translation of the Psalms a "radical" departure from the King James Version (Books, October 1st). Wood, in writing about Psalm 23, attributes "warlord" characteristics to a God who "will set out a table for me in front of mine enemies" (Verse 5). However, David, the author of Psalm 23, was a shepherd, and the psalm's predominant theme is that of a shepherd caring for his vulnerable sheep. Under this interpretation, as the sheep feasted in green pastures, the shepherd protected them from predators ("mine enemies") watching from the perimeter. The King James Version also attributes sacramental intent to the use of the word "anoint"—"thou anointest my head with oil" (Verse 5). Perhaps this refers instead to the reputed practice of applying oil to the faces of sheep to protect them from flies. The compelling metaphor of God as shepherd and humans as his sheep makes this psalm a beloved source of serenity, whether read from the King James Version or the new, Alter translation.

Roger Burt
Portland, Ore.

In reading Robert Alter's otherwise fine new translation of Psalm 23, it seems fitting to recall the provenance of David's poem, which seems to me to have been written in refuge from Saul in the Caves of Adullam. The line translated in the King James Version as "in the presence of mine enemies" and by Alter as "in the face of my foes" hardly begins to illuminate this revealing drama. Since I believe that the Hebrew, *tsorerai*, is best translated as "my harassers," implying the arrival of enemy forces, I envision, as David breaks bread with his men at the cave's mouth, Saul's scouts peering from the crest of the opposite bluff of the Vale of Elah, which separates David's temporary sanctuary from Saul's vanguard in the north. A second clue is David's "Naught but goodness and kindness shall pursue me," which seems to be written with heavy irony, given that the murderous Saul was in pursuit. The pastoral imagery of "green pastures" and "quiet waters," brilliantly chosen by David to contrast the security of God's shepherding and favor with the mortal dangers presented by the mad Saul, further suggests the Vale of Elah, which, like so many other ravines and defiles of Israel and other Mediterranean lands, erupts into broken pools and grassy verges with the onset of winter and spring rains.

Bernard Mann
Austin, Texas

FACING THE PAST

George Packer, in addressing the difficulties that the United States will face in the coming years as it prepares to withdraw from Iraq, also illustrates the stark dilemma that the U.S. faces as a result of the multitude of poor decisions made before going into Iraq in the first place ("Planning for Defeat," September 17th). As Packer writes, "The country seems trapped in an eternal present, paralyzed by its past mistakes. . . . A repetition of the institutional disarray with which America entered Iraq seems bound to mark our departure." Certainly, and regrettably, any alternative that requires this Administration to admit that it made a mistake—such as involving the international community—is a non-starter. Americans are upset and angry; George W. Bush's arrogance only encourages the desire for an expeditious withdrawal, even if it is not in America's best interests to do so. We need a Presidential candidate who will concede that we unnecessarily created this mess, but who will remain committed to fulfilling certain obligations we have to Iraq which preclude a hasty withdrawal.

Joel Schwartz
St. Johnsbury, Vt.

•

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"Tapestry in the Baroque: Threads of Splendor," at the Met. Photograph by Yola Monakhov.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
RENAISSANCE MAN

"Bingo with the Indians" is the third new play by Adam Rapp to be produced in New York this year, after "Essential Self-Defense" and "American Sligo." The comedy follows a malcontent East Village theatre company as it attempts to rob a bingo game in a New England town. (See page 13.)

NIGHT LIFE
OLD WORLD

The dynamic Spanish vocalist Buika has the timbre and style of a soul singer and the repertoire of a pop flamenco star. Her compatriot Macaco takes a catchy, pan-global approach that will be familiar to fans of Manu Chao. The two are touring the U.S. for the first time and appear at BAM as part of its inaugural "New Voices" series. (See page 14.)

ART
FRENCH CONNECTION

Gabriel de Saint-Aubin (1724-80) never left his native Paris, but throughout his life he drew, etched, and painted the city with a passionate, near-reportorial eye. The Frick Collection presents the first major retrospective of the Enlightenment-era artist in more than eighty years. (See page 16.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
NEW HAVEN BLUES

While at Yale, Charles Ives was known for his skill on the baseball diamond. Today, more than a hundred years later and a half century after his death, Ives is generally recognized as America's greatest classical composer. The next concert in the "Yale at Carnegie" series will feature performances of more than three dozen of Ives's songs. (See page 22.)

MOVIES
A HOAX IS A HOAX

The filmmaker Alan Abel, whose pranks were media commonplaces in the seventies, was one of the fathers of the mockumentary; among his works are "Is There Sex After Death?," from 1971, and "The Faking of the President," from 1974, which featured a Nixon impersonator. Anthology Film Archives presents a weekend of Abel's films and clips of his stunts. (See page 26.)

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WINTER CULTURAL CALENDAR

Wesleyan University • Middletown, Connecticut

Keiji Shinohara: "Color Harmony"

Through December 9 Tuesday-Sunday, 12-4 P.M. • wesleyan.edu/dac

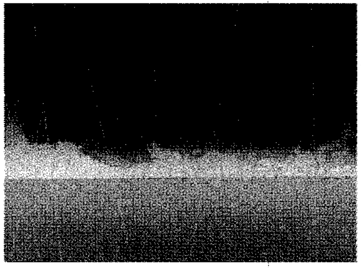
The master woodblock printmaker Keiji Shinohara employs the ancient Japanese printmaking method of ukiyo-e but experiments with nontraditional ink applications and materials. Thirty-five of the multilayered prints he has created since joining the Wesleyan faculty in 1995 are on exhibit.

Syracuse University • Syracuse, New York

Paquito D'Rivera: "Borat in Syracuse"

November 1, 8 P.M. • students.syr.edu/pulse

The Cuban-born New York-based clarinetist and saxophonist Paquito D'Rivera not only ranks among Latin jazz's living legends, but he also excels in crossover fare, from Brazilian to classical. The multiple Grammy-Award winner and NEA Jazz Master will perform the world première of his work "Borat in Syracuse."



Queens College • Flushing, New York

Brush with Nature: Installation Art by Barbara Roux

November 5–December 21 (times vary) • qcpages.qc.cuny.edu/Library

Barbara Roux's installation of photographs, sculptures, and narratives focusing on habitat changes in New York's remaining wild landscapes draws its inspiration from numerous sources. They include contemporary art, natural history, and Roux's prolonged stays in the wilderness, as well as her father's pharmacological research in the Amazon Delta.

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Caetano Veloso

November 7, 7:30 P.M. • carolinaperformingarts.org

One of Brazil's most significant pop artists, the guitarist and songwriter Caetano Veloso was one of the pioneers of the musically eclectic and socially aware Tropicália movement of the late sixties. Today, the melody maker continues to bring cultural commentary to his exploration of new sounds that fuse Brazilian traditional music with fado, tango, samba, reggae, and rock.

The University of Washington • Seattle

Gamelan Çudamani

November 9 & 10, 8 P.M. • uwworldseries.org

With the splendor and spectacle of an Indonesian temple festival, Gamelan Çudamani, a renowned twenty-five-member music, theatre, and dance troupe from Bali, recreates traditional village ceremony and ritual with gongs, chimes, and percussive rhythms that are at once meditative and mesmerizing.

University of Illinois • Urbana-Champaign

Savion and Friends

November 13, 7:30 P.M. • krannertcenter.org

From taking Broadway by storm in the four-time Tony Award-winning "Bring in 'Da Noise, Bring in 'Da Funk" in 1996 to creating the character of Mumbles, the dancing penguin, in the animated film "Happy Feet" a decade later, tap-dance virtuoso Savion Glover infuses his performances with a hard-hitting percussive style. Here he will be accompanied by a jazz combo.

Michigan State University • East Lansing

Lewis Black: "Red, White and Screwed"

November 18, 8 P.M. • whartoncenter.com

With his signature tirades, the humorist Lewis Black rants and raves about modern-day social and political issues. Known for his appearances on "The Daily Show With Jon Stewart," the funnyman lampoons subjects ranging from the Vice President's ill-fated hunting escapade to the government's response to Hurricane Katrina.

University of Florida • Gainesville

Yamato: The Drummers of Japan

November 18, 7:30 P.M. • performingarts.ufl.edu

Since bursting onto the international scene at the 1998 Edinburgh Fringe Festival, these *taiko* drummers have been invigorating audiences with their intensely physical rhythms ranging from the tapping of falling rain to explosions of pulsing exuberance.

Yale University • New Haven, Connecticut

"Tartuffe," by Molière Directed by Daniel Fish

November 26–December 22 (times vary) • yalerep.org

Nearly 350 years since its first staging, Molière's satirical comedy still keeps audiences laughing. The timeless tale of greed and hypocrisy begins when the affluent Orgon welcomes the rapscallion Tartuffe into his home and gets fooled by his seeming piety.

Columbia University • New York

Elliott Carter: "What Next?"

December 7, 8, 11 (times vary) • millertheatre.com

While the American classical composer Elliott Carter is best known for his innovative orchestral and visionary works for string quartet, in 1997 the two-time Pulitzer-Prize winner also wrote a one-act opera with librettist Paul Griffiths. This story of six people searching for meaning in the aftermath of a car crash makes its New York début.

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THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY
This Steppenwolf transfer by Tracy Letts ("Bug") is about the disappearance of an Oklahoma family man. Previews begin Oct. 30. (Imperial, 245 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

BINGO WITH THE INDIANS
At the Flea, a new play by Adam Rapp, about an East Village theatre company that travels to a small New England town. The Bats, the Flea's resident company, star; Rapp directs. Previews begin Oct. 25. (41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

A BRONX TALE
The Broadway début of Chazz Palminteri's 1989 one-man drama, about his childhood in the Bronx. Palminteri stars; Jerry Zaks directs. In previews. Opens Oct. 25. (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE BROTHERS SIZE
The Public Theatre presents the première of a play by Tarell Alvin McCraney, about two brothers, one a mechanic and the other a parolee. Tea Alagic directs. In previews. (425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

CROSSING BROOKLYN
Transport Group presents the première of a new musical, about two public-school teachers in love. Music by Jenny Giering; book and lyrics by Laura Harrington. Jack Cummings III directs. In previews. Opens Oct. 28. (Connelly, 220 E. 4th St. 212-352-3101.)

CYRANO DE BERGERAC
Kevin Kline and Jennifer Garner star in Edmond Rostand's play from 1897, with a translation by Anthony Burgess. David Leveaux directs. In previews. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE FARNSWORTH INVENTION
Hank Azaria and Jimmi Simpson star in a new play by Aaron Sorkin, about Philo Farnsworth, the boy genius who invented television, and David Sarnoff, the head of R.C.A., who challenged his patent ownership. Des McAnuff directs. In previews. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

FRANKENSTEIN
A new musical inspired by Mary Shelley's novel, adapted by Gary P. Cohen. With music by Mark Baron and book and lyrics by Jeffrey Jackson. In previews. (37 Arts, 450 W. 37th St. 212-307-4100.)

FUERZABRUTA
The creators of "De La Guarda" return, with a new production featuring a plenitude of special effects and water. Opens Oct. 24. (Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E. 212-239-6200.)

THE GLORIOUS ONES
A new musical by Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty, based on Francine Prose's novel about a troupe of commedia-dell'arte actors in seventeenth-century Italy. Graciela Daniele directs. In previews. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200.)

HAMLET
The New York première of the Wooster Group's production, directed by Elizabeth LeCompte. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

A HARD HEART
Kathleen Chalfant stars in this play by Howard Barker, in which a fictitious country is invaded. Will Pomerantz directs the Epic Theatre Ensemble production. Previews begin Oct. 30. (Clurman, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

HOODOO LOVE
Katori Hall wrote this play, set in the Mississippi Delta and Memphis, about a young woman who wants to sing the blues. Lucie Tiberghien directs. In previews. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 212-239-6200.)

OHIO STATE MURDERS
LisaGay Hamilton stars in Adrienne Kennedy's play, about a writer whose troubled past is brought to light on a visit to her alma mater. Evan Yionoulis directs. Previews begin Oct. 27. (The Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St. 646-223-3010.)

1001
Page 73 presents the première of a drama by Jason Grote, a take on Scheherazade's tales, exploring Israeli-Palestinian politics and the West's influence on them. Ethan McSweeny directs. In previews. (Nagelberg Theatre at Baruch Performing Arts Center, 55 Lexington Ave. 212-352-3101.)

PETER AND JERRY
Edward Albee has expanded his 1959 drama "Zoo Story," adding a new first act, about the earlier life of the character Peter. Bill Pullman, Dallas Roberts, and Johanna Day star. Pam MacKinnon directs. In previews. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

THE RECEPTIONIST
Adam Bock wrote this dark comedy, about a highly competent receptionist (Jayne Houdyshell) whose work is interrupted by a visiting stranger. Joe Mantello directs. In previews. Opens Oct. 30. (City Center, Stage I, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

ROCK 'N' ROLL
Brian Cox, Sinéad Cusack, and Rufus Sewell star in Tom Stoppard's new play, directed by Trevor Nunn, about an anti-Communist Prague rock band and the family of a British Marxist philosopher. In previews. (Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

SPAIN
Jim Knable wrote this comedy, about the fantasy life of a divorcée. Annabella Sciorra stars. In previews. Opens Oct. 30. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200.)

SPEECH & DEBATE
Stephen Karam's new play, about a high-school debate team in Oregon, presented by Roundabout Theatre Company. Jason Moore directs. In previews. Opens Oct. 29. (Roundabout Underground, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

THINGS WE WANT
The New Group presents the world première of a play by Jonathan Marc Sherman, directed by Ethan Hawke. Paul Dano, Peter Dinklage, Josh Hamilton, and Zoe Kazan star. In previews. (Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN
Mel Brooks adapts his 1974 film into a musical; Thomas Meehan co-wrote and Susan Stroman choreographs and directs. Roger Bart, Megan Mullally, Sutton Foster, Andrea Martin, and Christopher Fitzgerald star. In previews. (Hilton, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.)

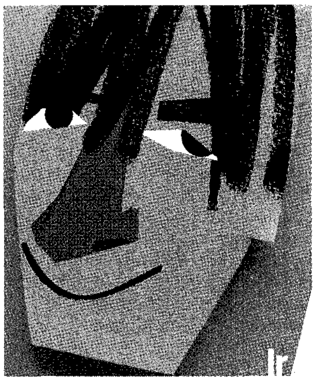
NOW PLAYING

A FEMININE ENDING
In Sarah Treem's play, directed by Blair Brown, Amanda (Gillian Jacobs), an oboist and aspiring composer, soliloquizes that she is "increasingly aware of the tyranny of gender"—in grammar, in the classical-music canon, and, most of all, in the way that life keeps handing her default options that place her in the shadow of men. As Amanda struggles to find equal footing with her fiancé, a rock musician on the cusp of stardom, her mother (Marsha Mason), a homemaker, stages her own attempt at self-liberation by walking out on Amanda's father. The seeds of feminism in Treem's script, alas, remain buried within impenetrably artificial dialogue and blank performances from the cast. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THE JOKE
Studio Dante presents a new play by Sam Marks, about a pair of Catskills comedians in 1965. Sam Gold directs. (257 W. 29th St. 212-868-4444.)

MINIMUM WAGE
A fast-food musical without satire yields about as much kick as a day-old Blimpie burger, in Guy Stroman's wearying production. Charlie and Jeff LaGreca, who wrote the confused book and limp lyrics, treat globalization and low-wage work as a backdrop—what they're really into is spatula fights and jokes about the guy who humps the grill. The uniformed workers—five white people with big vocabularies—play it manic, like standup comedians about to be booed offstage, escaping gratefully into the pretty melodies and smart a-cappella arrange-

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
BOYS TO MEN


LAURIE ROSENWALD

When, as an adolescent, the now thirty-nine-year-old playwright Jonathan Marc Sherman received a typewriter from his father, the idea of writing was of a piece with his earlier desire to be an actor: he loved the theatre. His brief stint as an actor has no doubt contributed to the pleasingly herky-jerky rhythms of his befuddled male characters' speech—he knows how to make language sound urban-sharp, and musical. In 1991, Sherman, along with Ethan Hawke, Steve Zahn, and others, formed the Malaparte Theatre Company, a collective that brought a new take on male anxiety to the American theatre, and was not embarrassed by its love of women, or its romanticism. Now Sherman (as writer) and Hawke (as director), along with the smashing young actors Paul Dano, Peter Dinklage, Josh Hamilton, and Zoe Kazan, are back, with "Things We Want" (in previews at the Acorn). The play is a kind of tone poem—with lots of whoopee-cushion laughs—about boys becoming men, and about the terror and humor of being born male at all.

—*Hilton Als*

ments (written with Sean Altman), which ease the pain of lyrics like "I never met a grill like you." (The Green Room, 45 Bleecker St. 212-239-6200.)

NONE OF THE ABOVE
Jenny Lyn Bader's play asks the question: Can Jamie (the fetching Halley Feiffer), a spoiled, precocious, emotionally starved Upper East Side teen-age slacker, raise her S.A.T. score to a perfect 2400? Clark (Adam Green), the genius nerd who tutors her, sees her potential and falls in love with her. Bader has the kind of tart, cocky wit that can work a room, but its "Look, Ma, I'm dancing" quality plays less well onstage. Still, her dialogue is droll, and it has attracted some vivacious young talent in Feiffer and Green. (Reviewed in our issue of 10/22/07.) (Lion, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THE OVERWHELMING
Roundabout Theatre Company presents J. T. Rogers's drama, about an American family living in Rwanda during the 1994 genocide. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

PYGMALION
Claire Danes and Jefferson Mays star in Shaw's drama. (Reviewed in this issue.) (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

THE RITZ
What Terrence McNally's 1975 pre-AIDS bathhouse romp (under the uneven direction of Joe Mantello) lacks almost completely, in addition to wit, is an internal design. The main character, Proclo (the charming Kevin Chamberlin), enters a bathhouse in order to avoid the Italian hit man his father-in-law ordered to kill him. There he is set upon by a series of sex-crazed boys and a deluded no-talent Latina singer, Googie Gomez (Rosie Perez). Though she is shoehorned into a shallow racial stereotype, Perez, when she sings, is allowed to resemble something closer to herself; she's feisty and full of fun. The spectacle of her medley of hits gives Mantello the rare opportunity to make burlesque stage pictures that are both well timed and well worked. The rest is travesty. (10/22/07) (Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300.)

A VIEW FROM 151ST STREET
This LAByrinth Theatre Company production, written by Bob Glaudini ("Jack Goes Boating") and directed by Peter DuBois, is a jazz-and-rap-infused story set in Harlem. A drug dealer, Delroy, played with wit and intensity by Craig (Mums) Grant, raps and does business on the corner of 151st and Broadway; Daniel (Juan Carlos Hernandez), an undercover detective, pursues him and ends up getting shot. Daniel, his family, his newly sober friend Ray (Andre Royo), and a nurse find themselves negotiating daily life and their relationships with one another as best they can. The dialogue crackles with energy and humor, and the likable cast is topnotch. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

Also Playing

AVENUE Q: Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **A CHORUS LINE:** Schoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **DIVIDING THE ESTATE:** 59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. Through Oct. 28. **GONE MISSING:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **HAMLET:** Pearl, 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802. Through Oct. 28. **JERSEY BOYS:** August Wilson, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200. **JUMP:** Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 212-307-4100. **MARGARET CHO'S THE SENSUOUS WOMAN:** Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 212-352-3101. **MAURITIUS:** Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **SPRING AWAKENING:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **XANADU:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

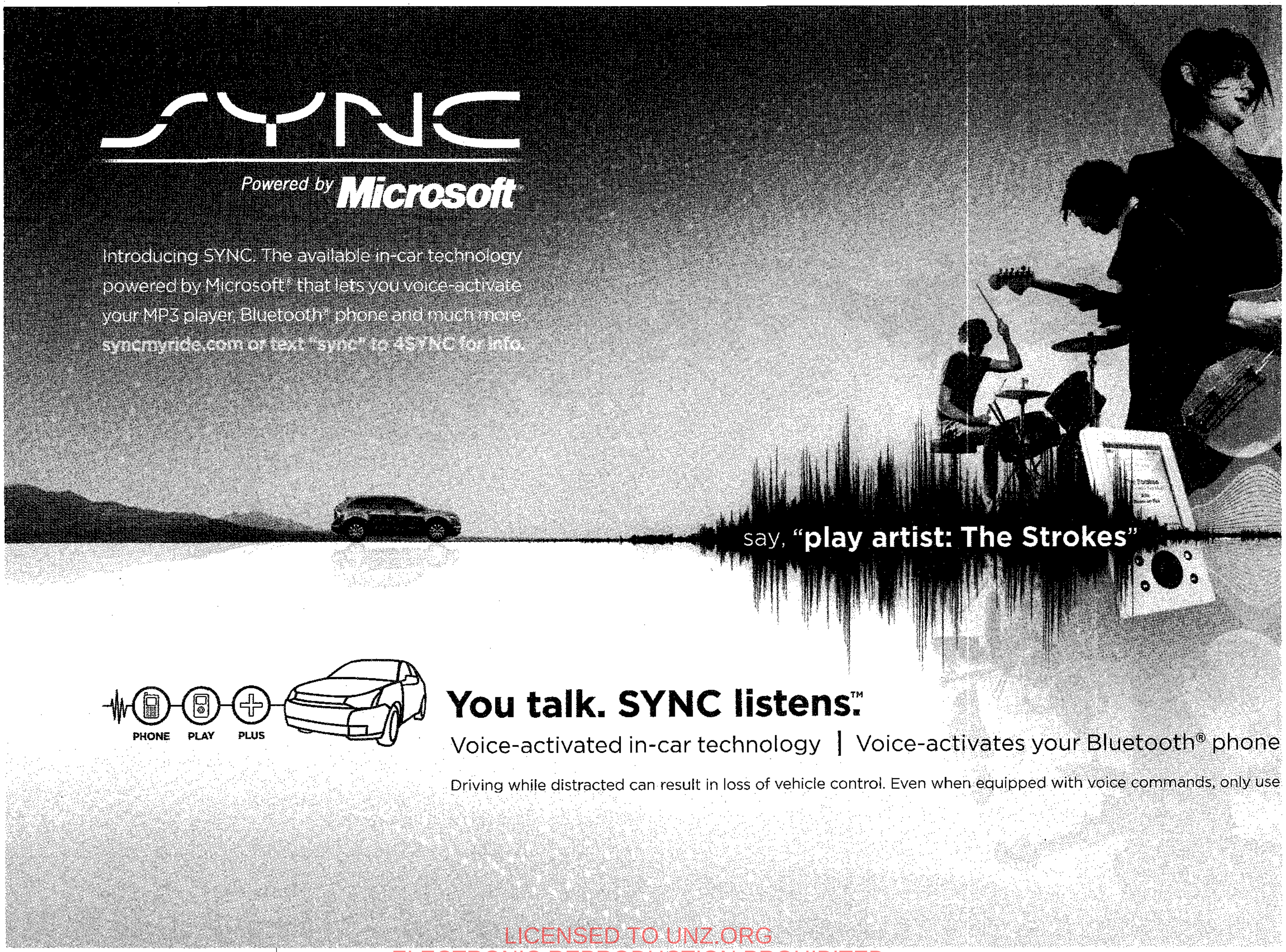
NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Oct. 24: The pop-music veteran **Dionne Warwick.** Oct. 26: The Springsteen cronies **Southside Johnny & the Asbury Jukes.** Oct. 29: The stylish young soul singer **Van Hunt** has followed up his eponymous début album, from 2004, with "On the Jungle Floor," a sprawling collection of retro-flavored material.

BROOKLYN ACADEMY OF MUSIC
30 Lafayette Ave. (718-636-4100)—Oct. 26: **Buika,** a native of Palma de Mallorca whose parents hail from Equatorial Guinea (she was born María Concepción Balboa Buika), sings an alluring combination of flamenco, soul, jazz, and blues. Her latest album, "Mi Niña Lola," garnered its producer, Javier Limón, top honors at Spain's version of the Grammys, the Premios de la Música. Oct. 27: **Macaco** (a.k.a. Dani Carbonell), from Barcelona, fleshes out the street-savvy genre of Catalan rumba by infusing it with elements of hip-hop, reggae, and rock. Backed by a rotating crew of musicians, he sings in Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, and English, delivering upbeat, texturally rich songs.

HIGHLINE BALLROOM
431 W. 16th St. (212-414-5994)—Oct. 26: The **Ultramagnetic MC's.** Back in the eighties, this Bronx-based group helped expand hip-hop by using samplers—which record and play back looped sound



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bites at different pitches—and incorporating guitar, keyboard, drums, and other live instruments. The local heroes, headed by the ever-entertaining Kool Keith, recently reunited for the album "The Best Kept Secret." Oct. 28: Upon its late-eighties début, New York City's **Prong** merged heavy metal with the unconventional tunings, odd time signatures, and post-punk experimentation emanating from CBGB, where the group's leader, Tommy Victor, worked as a soundman. The trio recorded a clutch of highly regarded albums that pushed metal in new directions, but it imploded a decade ago. After serving time with bands like Danzig and Ministry, Victor has assembled a new incarnation of Prong to continue his mission.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Oct. 24: As the singer for the Los Angeles alternative trio Concrete Blonde, **Johnette Napolitano** brought a strong, smoky presence to tracks like "Tomorrow, Wendy," "Joey," and "God Is a Bullet." Since disbanding the trio, in the mid-nineties, Napolitano has spent her time below the radar, dabbling in film scores and releasing her own music, but her voice remains an unmistakably powerful force.

LIVING ROOM
154 Ludlow St. (212-533-7235)—Oct. 25: **Peter Case,** the former leader of the L.A.-based New Wave band the Plimsouls, has a new album, "Let Us Now Praise Sleepy John." A collection of original country blues and poignant, literate ballads, it's as trustworthy and durable as a favorite pair of bluejeans. Case's timeless yet contemporary compositions, performed on solo acoustic guitar with the occasional backing vocal, come off as gracefully aged as those recorded and written by some of his biggest influences—Blind Willie McTell, Lightnin' Hopkins, Dave Van Ronk, and the album's namesake, Sleepy John Estes.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—Oct. 26: The Motor City garage act the **Detroit Cobras** are led by the vocalist Rachel Nagy—a former butcher and stripper—and the guitarist Mary Ramirez. They're known for souping up old soul and girl-group numbers with high-octane intensity.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—Oct. 28: The latest thing to come out of the Philadelphia psychedelic-folk revival is a new soundtrack to the surrealistic 1970 Czech film "Valerie and Her Week of Wonders." Accompanying the album of dreamy and ethereal music, "The Valerie Project," is a live show featuring a ten-member band and a screening of a new 35-mm. print of the film.

NOKIA THEATRE TIMES SQUARE
Broadway at 44th St. (212-307-7171)—Oct. 24: **Underoath,** an earnest metal band from Florida, is a key player in the oft-maligned subgenre of Christian rock. They temper their faith with a megaton of screaming vocal force, which has helped them cross over to a secular audience of angry teen-agers. Oct. 30: The cannabis-friendly hip-hop trio **Cypress Hill.**

"STATEN ISLAND COMPOSERS PROJECT"
The often overlooked borough is home to **David Johansen,** a bona-fide musical chameleon (and S.I. native) who, in addition to having fronted the New York Dolls, thirty-odd years ago, has been a brassy lounge singer (as Buster Poindexter) and a purveyor of back-porch Americana (with his band the Harry Smiths); **Galt MacDermot,** the seventy-nine-year-old musical-theatre icon and composer of "Hair"; and **Vernon Reid,** the erstwhile Living Colour guitarist and eraser of musical boundaries. On Oct. 27, the three come together for an evening that promises to be nothing short of stylistically dizzying. (St. George Theatre, 35 Hyatt St., St. George, Staten Island. 212-307-7171.)

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
Oct. 25: For a quarter century, **Fred Ho** and his Afro Asian Music Ensemble have resolutely mixed the personal and the political into the maelstrom of new jazz. The fiercely imaginative baritone saxophonist and composer and his tenacious crew will celebrate their twenty-fifth anniversary in style. (Thalia Theatre, Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St.) Oct. 27: The bluegrass stars **Ralph Stanley and the Clinch Mountain Boys, Hazel Dickens,** and **Doyle Lawson** and **Quicksilver.** (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. For more information, call 212-545-7536.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Oct. 24-27: **Phoebe Snow** makes her first local club appearance in nearly two decades. Her presence on the charts ended, for the most part, in the seventies, but her vigor and vocal skills endure.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—The ever-popular alto saxophonist and smooth-jazz legend **David Sanborn** takes over Oct. 23-28.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—Oct. 23-28: **Steve Turre,** the expert trombonist and reigning jazz-conch kingpin, invites **Stefon Harris,** the most promising vibraphonist of his generation, to sit in with his band.

FEINSTEIN'S AT LOEWS REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—Through Oct. 27: The witty and erudite performer **Mary Cleere Haran** trains her sights on Doris Day.

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IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Oct. 25-26: **Endangered Species.** A number of impressive guests, both veteran players and younger luminaries, join **David Weiss's** Wayne Shorter tribute big band in a celebration of the brilliant saxophonist and composer. Oct. 27-28: Two former musical prodigies, the guitarist **Stanley Jordan** and the bassist **Charnett Moffett,** join forces. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** The **Mingus Big Band** takes over on Tuesdays.

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
Broadway at 60th St. (212-721-6500)—Oct. 25-27: **Wynton Marsalis** and the house orchestra survey the innovative big-band arrangements of Gil Evans. Oct. 26-27: Evans also wrote for smaller ensembles, including important uncredited work for his close friend and collaborator Miles Davis. The saxophonist **Branford Marsalis** and a hand-picked sextet will explore these compact scores in the Allen Room.

"JAZZ IMPROV LIVE!"
The magazine *Jazz Improv* sponsors its first conference, featuring panel discussions, lectures, workshops, and musical performances. Highlights include the **Jimmy Heath Big Band** (Oct. 26, at the Manhattan Center Grand Ballroom) and, later that night, the **McCoy Tyner All Star Trio,** with the bassist **Stanley Clarke** and the drummer **Jack DeJohnette.** (For more information, visit www.jazzimprov.com/live. Oct. 25-28.)

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Oct. 27-28: **Rashied Ali,** John Coltrane's last drummer, is a free-jazz whiz with a penchant for hard bop, as he proves leading a muscular quintet.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Oct. 28: Duetting on their new album, "Spark!," the saxophonist and clarinettist **Marty Ehrlich** and the pianist **Myra Melford** bring out the best in each other; the result is equal parts new-jazz virtuosity and lyricism.

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART
150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000, ext. 344)—Oct. 26: The ambitious saxophonist and composer **Chris Byars** performs with a lean musical combo of bass, drums, and trombone (the fine **John Mosca**) amid an opulent display of classic Himalayan art.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Oct. 23-Nov. 4: The **Bill Charlap** trio returns to the scene of their latest recording, "Live at the Village Vanguard," another prime example of the pianist and his bandmates' exceptional unity and poise. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"The Age of Rembrandt"** arrays all two hundred and twenty-eight of the Met's circa-seventeenth-century Dutch paintings according to the dates they were acquired. The dubious idea pays off, as odd juxtapositions of stupendous Rembrandts and Vermeers with radiant lesser masters (and intriguing faux Rembrandts) jolt the pictures to fresh attention. Through Jan. 6, 2008. ♦ **"Tapestry in the Baroque: Threads of Splendor."** Through Jan. 6, 2008. ♦ **"Eternal Ancestors: The Art of the Central African Reliquary."** Through March 2, 2008. ♦ **"Abstract Expressionism and Other Modern Works: The Muriel Kallis Steinberg Newman Collection."** Through Feb. 3, 2008. ♦ **"The Gates of Paradise: Lorenzo Ghiberti's Renaissance Masterpiece."** Opens Oct. 30. ♦ **"Impressed by Light: British Photographs from Paper Negatives, 1840-1860."** Through Dec. 31. ♦ **"Gifts for the Gods: Images from Egyptian Temples."** Through Feb. 18, 2008. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Georges Seurat: The Drawings."** Opens Oct. 28. ♦ **"Present Tense: Photographs by JoAnn Verburg."** Through Nov. 5. ♦ **"Lost Vanguard: Soviet Modernist Architecture, 1922-1932."** Through Oct. 29. ♦ **"New Photography 2007: Tanyth Berkeley, Scott McFarland, Berni Searle."** Through Jan. 1, 2008. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Richard Prince: Spiritual America."** Through Jan. 8, 2008. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

TABLES FOR TWO

WAKIYA

2 Lexington Ave. (212-995-1330)—The hotelier Ian Schrager, looking for a chef for the restaurant in his renovated Gramercy Park Hotel, settled upon Yuji Wakiya, a Japanese chef who trained in China and has successfully adapted Chinese cooking to Japanese tastes. Whether the resulting fusion does much for American tastes is another question. In a Gramercy Park Hotel so fancy it's no longer like the Gramercy Park Hotel, you find yourself eating Chinese food so fancy it no longer tastes like Chinese food.

The long, narrow room is done up in a kind of opium-den chic, with tasselled curtains and satin sofas in raise-the-red-lantern red and black-pearl black. Friendly waiters walk you through a menu that's short on explanations. What is Chin Shan? It means "clear aroma," a waitress says, and involves steaming ingredients at the table with oolong tea poured over hot rocks: "It's like a green-tea facial for food." But lobster and vegetables, lying innocent of all flavor in a bamboo basket, seem none the better for their spa treatment. Such airy nothings are hard to take seriously—a problem for a place with the ambitions, and the prices, of Wakiya. And there are too many revamped versions of Chinese standbys which are less enjoyable than the unvamped originals: Peking duck came with leaves of duck skin, not as crispy as they should be, affixed to prawn crackers.

But there are plenty of good things. Shanghai soup dumplings look like the sort of ice pack that Lucille Ball would clutch to her head, and disgorge a satisfying broth that is offset by strands of ginger in the accompanying vinegary sauce. Fried rice is wrapped in an omelette and flavored with XO sauce (which is made from some twenty kinds of spice and dried seafood and labor-intensively re-creates the comforts of MSG). The most exciting thing on the menu is the Signature Mango Pudding. This arrives flamboyantly: a tiny dish atop a tea kettle that billows great clouds of lychee-scented vapor. (There's dry ice inside.) The pudding itself appears to be simply pieces of mango lightly crushed by hand, but it's subtly anchored by cream and gelatine. The presentation may be a decadent gimmick, but it's a really good decadent gimmick. As soon as the dry ice subsided, the table ordered another. (Open daily for dinner. Dishes $6-$38.)

—*Leo Carey*

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—**"Kara Walker: My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love."** Through Feb. 3, 2008. ♦ **"Piotr Uklanski: Summer of Love."** Through Dec. 9. ♦ **"Neither New Nor Correct: New Work by Mark Bradford."** Through Nov. 25. ♦ **"Danny Lyon: Montage, Film, and Still Photography."** Through Dec. 2. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Infinite Island: Contemporary Caribbean Art."** Through Jan. 27, 2008. ♦ **"Brushed with Light: American Landscape Watercolors from the Collection."** Through Jan. 27, 2008. ♦ **"Global Feminisms Remix."** Through Feb. 3, 2008. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

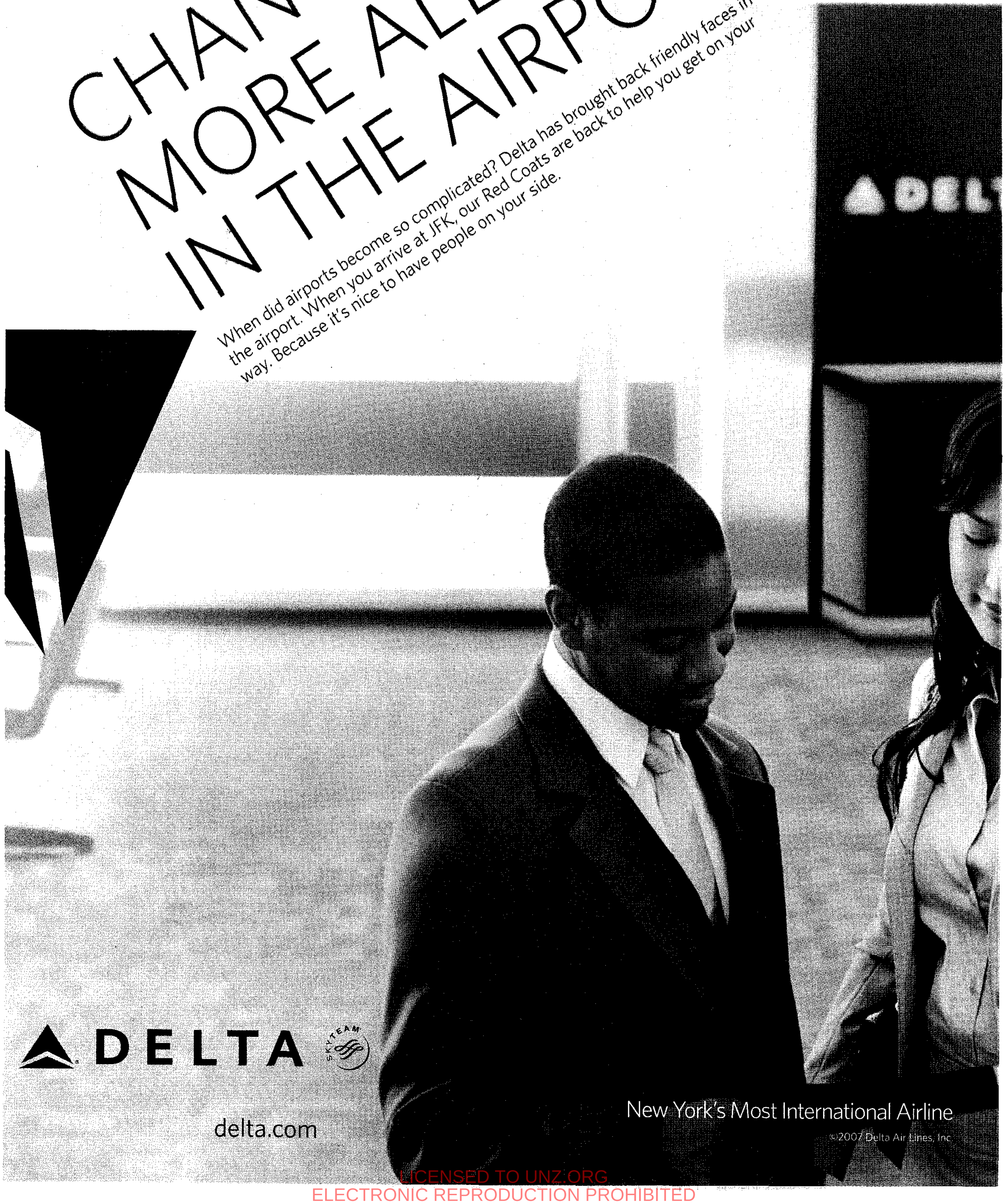
AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—For the next eight months, around five hundred specimens will flit through the Butterfly Conservatory, a pocket-size hothouse planted with orchids and other rain-forest flora. Some of the butterflies resemble flying blossoms, others quivering, iridescent leaves; gestating pupae arrayed in a special case look like alien jewels. Flanking the vivarium are displays describing the lepidopteran population of the tri-state area; among the serried rows one finds extravagantly gorgeous specimens, including the electric-blue Morpho, favored by the collector Vladimir Nabokov. Through May 26, 2008. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

BRONX MUSEUM OF THE ARTS
1040 Grand Concourse (718-681-6000)—**"Quisqueya Henríquez: The World Outside."** The Cuban-born artist, now based in the Dominican Republic, is a Conceptualist jokester, using minimal means to explore issues of Caribbean cultural identity. Manipulated ready-mades often work on a continuum that runs from the flimsy to the flat-footed, and this show, at its weakest, slides toward these extremes. But, when Henríquez hits the sweet spot, regional clichés like sports, dance, and tropical beaches are transformed into moments of material poetry. A gutted soccer ball becomes a stylish cloche; a video shows feet flashing in a merengue, filmed through a hole in a crumbling wall. The salty, bright-blue ice cream that's available for tasting is made with seawater specially shipped from the D.R. Through Jan. 27, 2008. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6, and Friday evenings until 8.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**"Gabriel de Saint-Aubin (1724-1780)."** Opens Oct. 30. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 5.)

MORGAN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM
225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. (212-685-0008)—**"Painted with Words: Vincent van Gogh's Letters to Émile Bernard."** Through Jan. 6, 2008. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5, Fridays, 10:30 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
Fifth Ave. at 103rd St. (212-534-1672)—Crestfallen Mets and Yankees fans can renew their faith in **"The Glory Days: New York Baseball 1947-1957,"** which revisits the decade during which the city's three major-league teams dominated the sport, winning nine World Series. The show opens with a highlight reel narrated by Vin Scully, covering Babe Ruth's retirement through the decampment of the Dodgers and the Giants to California. Pennant-shaped display cases are



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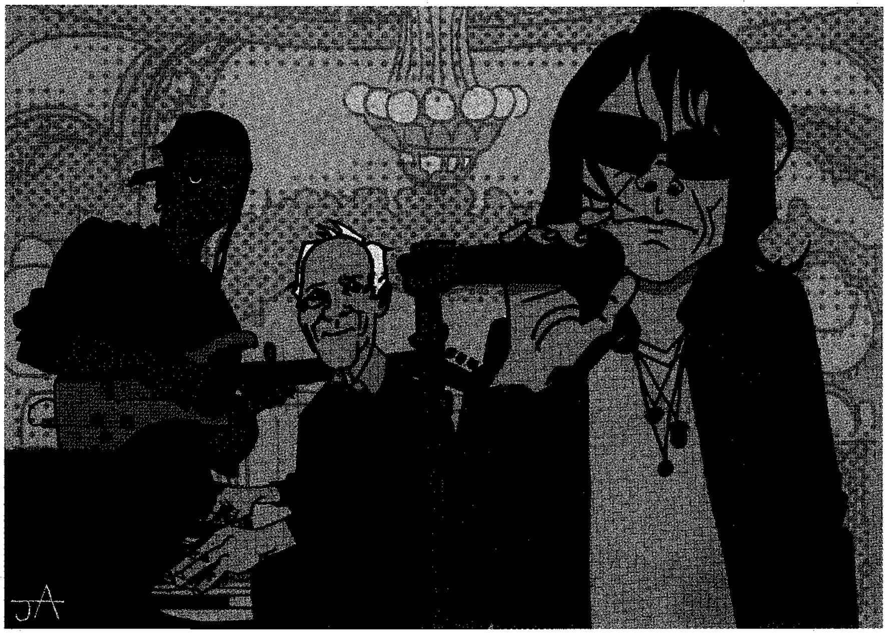
packed with memorabilia—signed balls, bats, and gloves, uniforms, photographs, and a 1952 letter from Gil Hodges to Ty Cobb, soliciting hitting advice. Most moving is a section on the integration of the sport, in 1947, when the Dodgers signed Jackie Robinson. Through Dec. 31. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Galleries are usually open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; please call the gallery for exact hours.

FRANCIS ALŸS
In the past twenty years, the Mexico City-based Belgian artist has collected nearly three hundred portraits of St. Fabiola, most based on a lost original, painted by Jean-Jacques Henner in 1885. In a dark-panelled gallery at the Hispanic Society of America, a large number of these works hang on the walls or are laid out on tables. Straightforward copies, painted in oil on canvas, are installed alongside craft-fairish versions, executed in beans or needlepoint. The theory-minded will cite ideas of authenticity, replication, and mass production; others may see a precedent in the artist Jim Shaw's collection of thrift-store paintings. For some, the greatest resonance of the densely layered accumulation may be spiritual. Call it holy Conceptualism. Through April 6, 2008. (613 W. 115th St. 212-926-2234.)



Vernon Reid, Galt MacDermot, and David Johansen perform on Staten Island.

JOHN F. SIMON, JR.
Computer-based wall works take a fanciful, labor-intensive approach to abstraction. Animations (driven by software coded by the artist himself) are embedded in colorful wood, acrylic, and Formica housings—and sometimes reflected in mirrors—to create moving, mutable polychrome sculptures. Digital stripes shift or revolve in concert with painted ones; decorative vegetal motifs spin and spiral. It's all very slick and expert, but Simon's purported attempt to echo the forces of nature in the systems of software goes too far. The works end up feeling more like high-concept gimmickry than like rigorous explorations of nonobjective art. Through Nov. 3. (Gering & Lopez, 730 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 646-336-7183.)

BURK UZZLE
Uzzle's big, garish color photographs of American vernacular oddities and "outsider" sites are not exactly subtle, but they can be entertaining. Down-home eccentricity rules: a wall in Seattle is a pointillist landscape of chewing gum, a scraggly patch of wasteland in Alabama bristles with wooden crosses and crude signs about Jesus and hellfire. Even more appealing are the pictures that Uzzle made at Woodstock on a few historic days in the summer of 1969. His image of a couple embracing amid a sea of soggy humanity is one of the event's key souvenirs, and it's joined here by other shots of mud, nudity, and communal bathing, for a brief back-to-the-garden refresher course. Through Oct. 27. (Laurence Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 212-397-3930.)

"MAKING A HOME"
Works by thirty-three Japanese artists based in New York are organized according to loose themes like "Intimacy and Identity" and "Referencing the Landscape," but the real subject here is eclecticism. Yumi Kori, Emiko Kasahara, and Yoshiaki Kaihatsu all make meditation chambers of sorts, with materials that range from red light bulbs to sheer panty hose to polystyrene packaging. Yoko Ono invites visitors to contribute sentimental graffiti under the prompt "My Mommy Is Beautiful," while Ayakoh Furukawa's take on childhood innocence is expressed in charming pencil drawings. Noritoshi Hirawaka's spellbinding video—a love triangle unfolds in a dance—was shot in a gas station in Martinique, with nothing New York about it save attitude. Through Jan. 13, 2008. (Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. 212-832-1155.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

IDRIS KHAN
Khan, a British photographer making his New York solo début, is known for appropriating not just one famous image but an entire body of work. His "Homage to Bernd Becher," shown here, superimposes all of Becher's pictures of water towers until they become one atomized apparition. The other works in this show (including a meditative three-panel film) involve a similar accumulation, but Khan's main subjects are texts and music scores rather than images. Enormous photographs of every page of the Koran and "Thus Spake Zarathustra" are nervous abstractions that, like Glenn Ligon's densest text pieces, tip into obliteration and get lost in the voluptuous void of the gutter. Through Oct. 29. (Lambert, 550 W. 21st St. 212-242-3611.)

CHRIS MARKER
The French filmmaker shows nearly two hundred small, unframed black-and-white photographs in Peter Blum's two locations (here and in SoHo). Marker's film stills, snapshots, and more formal compositions from the past sixty years include images of well-known people (Simone Signoret, Fidel Castro, Salvador Dali) but focus primarily on anonymous citizens seen in passing, some of whom engage the camera with a soulful stare. As an installation, the work accentuates an old-fashioned, we-are-the-world sincerity with a powerful dose of nostalgia for protests past (Paris, 1968) and present (Paris, 2006). The result is an updated "Family of Man," just as earnest as the original but rather less optimistic and only slightly more relevant. Through Nov. 1. (526 W. 29th St. 212-244-6055.)

COLLIER SCHORR
Schorr's highly idiosyncratic investigation of masculinity and its discontents takes an intriguing detour. In a show that includes far more drawing than the photography for which she is best known, she spins the brief life of a teen drag racer and Vietnam casualty into a fragmented narrative of war and remembrance. Schorr's pencil drawings of cars, guys, and soldiers recall both Warhol and Pettibon; they're not as arresting as her photographs, but they share the same sort of intense yet casual regard. What might have been dourly elegiac turns tender and thoughtful—a modest meditation on death at an early age, which couldn't be more timely. Through Oct. 27. (303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 212-255-1121.)

"I AM AS YOU WILL BE"
Skeletons and skulls are familiar subjects in art (see Brueghel, Holbein, da Vinci, El Greco, et al.), variously serving as memento mori, harrowing artifact, and anatomical frame. Among the thirty-five artists represented here are James Ensor, Sherrie Levine, Paul Delvaux, Andy Warhol, Lynda Benglis, and Damien Hirst, the latter represented not by the diamond-encrusted skull that set off waves of indignation but by a more modest pair of his-and-hers plastic-and-rubber skeletons. United only in subject, the works cohere into an absorbing rumination on the way of all flesh. Through Nov. 3. (Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727.)

Short List

ALIGHIERO E BOETTI: Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 212-206-9300. Through Nov. 24. **ISAAC JULIEN:** Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 212-206-7100. Opens Oct. 25. **MIRANDA LICHTENSTEIN:** Dee, 545 W. 20th St. 212-924-7545. Through Nov. 24. **WOLFGANG TILLMANS:** Rosen, 545 W. 24th St. 212-627-6000. Through Nov. 24. **KARA WALKER:** Sikkema Jenkins & Co., 530 W. 22nd St. 212-929-2340. Through Nov. 21.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

WILHELM SASNAL
It's hard to have new thoughts about Elvis, and only slightly easier to make bona-fide art using YouTube. Sasnal scores on both counts. His short film pirates already pirated footage of the King, foregrounds its derivation from the collective consciousness that is the Web—and that's it. Pixellated clips stage the disintegration of the man, who dissolves into a sequinned, sweaty whiteout. Elvis's falsetto, transmitted clearly despite otherwise deteriorated conditions, sounds beautiful. When a surprise guest appears in the form of the cult favorite Daniel Johnston singing "Casper the Friendly Ghost," it's nutty but touching. Through Oct. 27. (Swiss Institute, 495 Broadway, at Spring St. 212-925-2035.)

Short List

CAROL BOVE: Maccarone, 630 Greenwich St. 212-431-4977. Through Oct. 27. **CHRIS MARKER:** Blum, 99 Wooster St. 212-343-0441. Through Nov. 8. **MIKE NELSON:** Creative Time, 117 Delancey St. 212-206-6674. Through Nov. 1. **EILEEN QUINLAN:** Abreu, 36 Orchard St. 212-995-1774. Through Dec. 9. **FRANK STELLA:** Freeman, 560 Broadway. 212-966-5154. Through Nov. 7.

JASHAR AWAN

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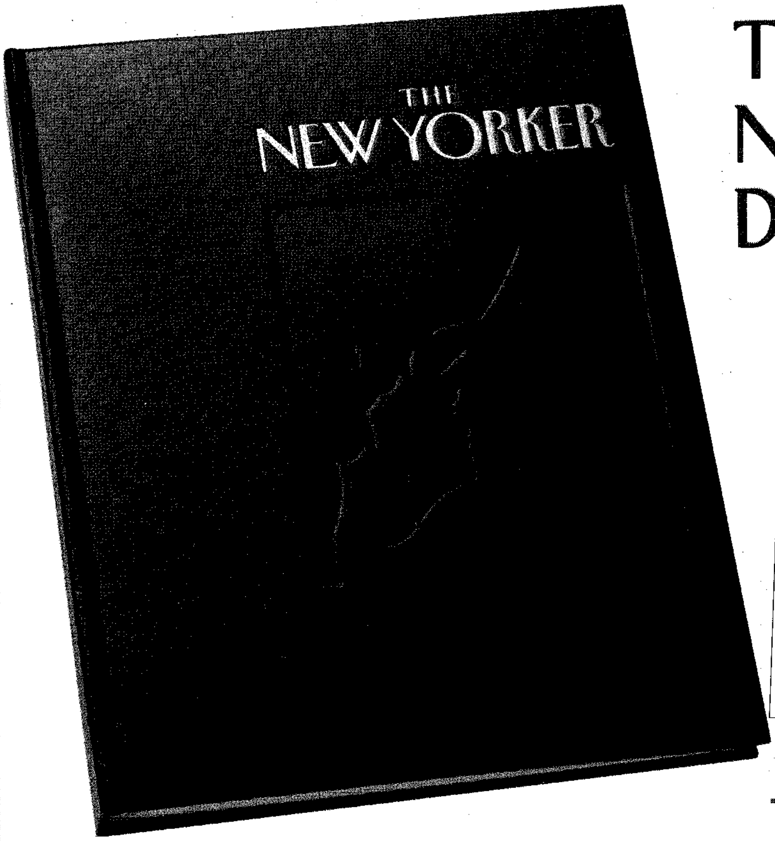

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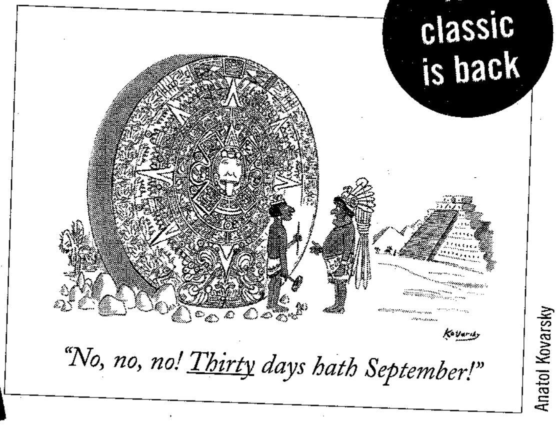
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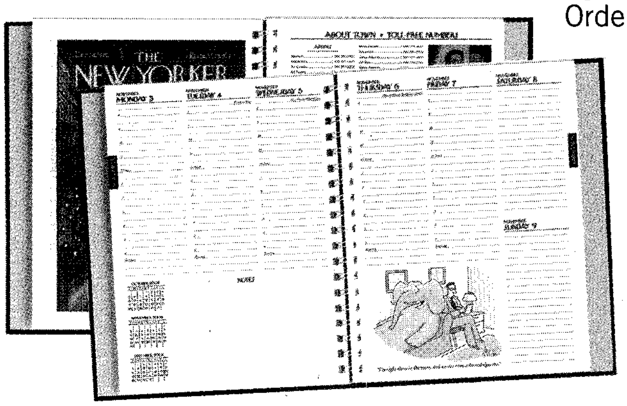

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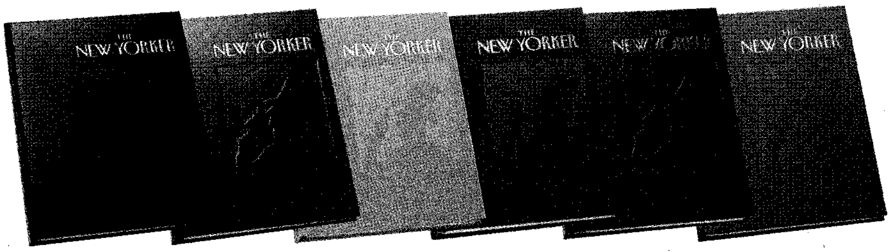

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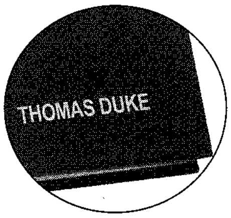

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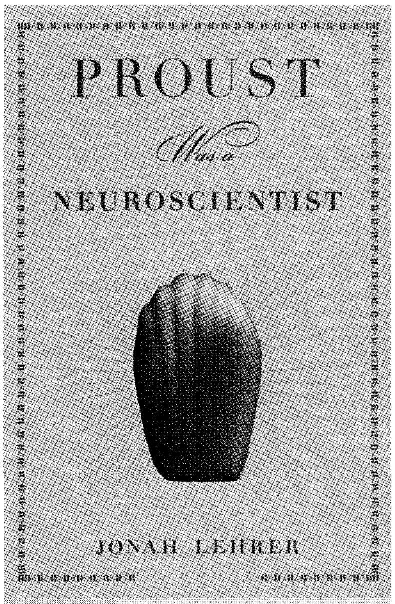

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DANCE

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE
Two new works are unveiled this week: "C. to C. (Close to Chuck)," Jorma Elo's ballet set to Philip Glass's "Musical Portrait of Chuck Close," and "From Here On Out," a collaboration between the young choreographer Benjamin Millepied and the even younger composer Nico Muhly. The cast of Antony Tudor's elegiac "The Leaves Are Fading," set to Dvořák chamber music for strings, will be led on Wednesday by the lyrical Julie Kent and Marcelo Gomes, but several corps dancers, including Melissa Thomas, will also have their moment in the sun. This week also features company premières of Balanchine's "Ballo della Regina," set to the ballet music from Verdi's "Don Carlos," and Twyla Tharp's seductive "Baker's Dozen." ♦ Oct. 24 at 7:30: "Clear," "The Leaves Are Fading," and "Fancy Free." ♦ Oct. 25 at 7:30: "Clear," "Meadow," and "Ballo della Regina." ♦ Oct. 26 at 8: "Ballo della Regina," "The Leaves Are Fading," and "From Here On Out." ♦ Oct. 27 at 2: "Ballo della Regina," "Meadow," and "Fancy Free" (with Herman Cornejo). ♦ Oct. 27 at 8: "Clear," "C. to C. (Close to Chuck)," and "From Here On Out." ♦ Oct. 28 at 1:30: "Ballo della Regina," "C. to C. (Close to Chuck)," and "Fancy Free." ♦ Oct. 28 at 7: "The Leaves Are Fading," "Meadow," and "From Here On Out." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. Through Nov. 4.)

BALLET DU GRAND THÉÂTRE DE GENÈVE
The company has its New York début, at the Joyce. Saburo Teshigawara's "Para-Dice" is a highly aestheticized exploration of chance. "Loin" ("Far Away"), by the young Belgian-Moroccan choreographer Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui (a former student of Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker), is a visceral, multi-hued work that incorporates Arabian settings, yoga, and storytelling. In "Selon Désir," the Greek-born former Béjart dancer Andonis Foniadakis taps the sensuality and intensity in the opening choruses of Bach's St. Matthew and St. John Passions. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Oct. 23-24 at 7:30, Oct. 25-26 at 8, Oct. 27 at 2 and 8, and Oct. 28 at 2.)

DAVID NEUMANN/ADVANCED BEGINNER GROUP
"Feedforward" toys with the analogy between dance and sports. There's no ball in this piece, no winners or losers. Instead, Neumann explores athletic physicality, patterns in space, and many events happening at once. Karinne Keithley's text pokes at the artist-athlete comparison while sending up the inanities of sports broadcasting. This is the sort of thing that Neumann's crew of comedian-dancers excels at. A band of four trombonists plays along. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Oct. 23-27 at 7:30. Through Nov. 3.)

"WHAT IF SAORI HAD A PARTY?"
John Moran, the category-defying composer and onetime Philip Glass protégé, teams up with the charismatic dancer Saori Tsukada for a multimedia look at the interplay of Japanese and American culture. Taking the form of a Japanese children's TV show, the work combines a spliced sound score with Japanese text, lip-synching, and extensively rehearsed sequences that look unplanned. (P.S. 122, at 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-352-3101. Oct. 23-27 and Oct. 30 at 8:30. Through Nov. 4.)

"TYOHAAR"
At the World Financial Center's Winter Garden, the New Jersey-based Surati for Performing Arts (directed by the dancer and choreographer Rimli Roy) employs the Indian dance forms bharata natyam, kathak, and odissi in a program that illustrates some of India's fall festivals, from Diwali (the "festival of lights") to Dussehra (which celebrates the defeat of the demon Ravana by the lord Rama). Performances are free. (220 Vesey St. 212-945-0505. Oct. 24 at 12:30 and 7.)

PIERRE RIGAL
In the course of his forty-five-minute solo "Érection," the French dancer reënacts human evolution. Starting supine, he progresses fitfully, as if by trial and error, from all fours to two legs, squatting and then standing. At various points along the way, unsure which end should go up, he looks like a break-dancer. For the most part, Rigal, a former hurdler, negotiates the transformation like an athlete. There's pathos in his awkward determination, especially as he's thwarted by Aurélien Bory's light projections, which seem to trap him in a kind of retro video game. (Baryshnikov Arts Center, 450 W. 37th St. 212-279-4200. Oct. 24-26 at 7:30 and Oct. 27 at 7:30 and 9:30.)

"BUTOH PARADE"
The Japan Society's festival continues with "Butoh America," a work that the septuagenarian Akira Kasai has created for himself and five U.S.-based dancers, and wraps up with a Butoh Marathon. After a few hours of offerings by Jeff Janisheski, Yanira Castro, and others, a hundred-and-first-birthday party for the Butoh founder Kazuo Ohno kicks off with a rare appearance by his son, Yoshito, performing the haunting solo "Emptiness." The marathon also marks the beginning of the monthlong New York Butoh Festival. (333 E. 47th St. 212-715-1258. Akira Kasai: Oct. 25-26 at 7:30 and Oct. 27 at 2. Marathon: Oct. 27 at 4:30.)

"FRIDAYS @ NOON"
This Friday, the spotlight is on three emerging choreographers: the Milwaukee-based Catey Ott, who performs a solo; Philippa Kaye, who brings two pieces, one new and one old; and Adam Scher, whose work draws from ballet and Afro-Caribbean dance. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Oct. 26 at noon.)

"ODALAN BALI"
The twenty-six-member Balinese ensemble Çudamani presents its dramatization of the Hindu temple ceremony known as Odalan, with gamelan music, a figurative cockfight, and Balinese traditional dance. (Skirball Center, 566 LaGuardia Pl. 212-279-4200. Oct. 27 at 8 and Oct. 28 at 2.)

ELISA MONTE DANCE
This year's run at the Joyce brings back two signature works: the ritualistic ensemble piece "Pigs and Fishes," created for the Alvin Ailey company, and the sensual duet "Treading," created for the Martha Graham troupe before it joined the Ailey repertory. "Slope of Enlightenment," a première, is a study of resilience. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Oct. 30 at 7:30. Through Nov. 4.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
The latest iteration of Sonja Frisell's wonderfully grand production of **"Aida"** features such estimable singers as Micaela Carosi, Olga Borodina, Marco Berti, Juan Pons, and Vitalij Kowaljow; Kazushi Ono conducts. (Oct. 24 at 8.) ♦ With Andrzej Dobber replacing Pons. (Oct. 27 and Oct. 30 at 8.) ♦ Mary Zimmerman's sober but involving new production of **"Lucia di Lammermoor,"** with Annick Massis, Stephen Costello (a tenor of outstanding promise, as Edgardo), Mariusz Kwiecien, and John Relyea, singing under the experienced direction of James Levine. (Oct. 25 at 8.) ♦ Maria Guleghina, the forceful Russian soprano who has (gloriously) sung the role of Abigaille in the Met's production of Verdi's "Nabucco," returns to take on another punishing part—Lady Macbeth—in a new production (by Adrian Noble) of the same composer's **"Macbeth,"** one of his most complex and demanding creations; Željko Lučić, who made his Met début in last season's "La Gioconda," takes the title role. Also with Dimitri Pittas and John Relyea; Levine. (Oct. 26 at 8.) ♦ The Met's new **"Madama Butterfly"** ushered in Peter Gelb's tenure last year with such brazen confidence that not a single patron has looked back. It's even more stunning in revival, with the exquisite Patricia Racette offering a tireless performance as the heartbroken Cio-Cio-San. In the filmmaker Anthony Minghella's production, fabrics twirl, lanterns move, and screens slide to create an enchanting cinematography for the stage. With Roberto Alagna, Maria Zifchak, and Luca Salsi; Mark Elder. (Oct. 27 at 1:30.) ♦ With due credit to Peter Gelb, the seed for the "new Met" era sprouted during Joseph Volpe's rule with Julie Taymor's relentlessly entertaining, pageant-like 2004 production of **"Die Zauberflöte."** Diana Damrau, Anna-Kristiina

Kaappola, Eric Cutler, and Stéphane Degout are featured in the cast; Kyrill Petrenko. (Oct. 29 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA

Handel's bubbly, brilliant **"Agrippina,"** with Nelly Miricioiu, Heidi Stober, Jennifer Rivera, David Walker, David Korn, Marco Nisticò, and João Fernandes; Ransom Wilson conducts. (Oct. 24 at 7:30.) ♦ The final performances of Stephen Lawless's rousing new production of the classic verismo double bill of **"Cavalleria Rusticana"** and **"Pagliacci,"** with Irina Rindzuner, Ariana Chris, Elizabeth Caballero, Carl Tanner (a powerful Canio in "Pagliacci"), and Kip Wilborn; George Manahan. (Oct. 25 and Oct. 27 at 8.) ♦ **"Carmen,"** with Beth Clayton, Jennifer Black, Scott Piper, and Carlos Archuleta; Joseph Rescigno. (Oct. 26 at 8 and Oct. 28 at 1:30.) ♦ Cassandre Berthon makes her City Opera début in the title role of **"Cendrillon,"** Massenet's luscious treatment of the Cinderella tale. The new production, from Opéra de Montréal, also features débuts from Katherine Jolly, Frédéric Antoun, and Eugene Brancoveanu, joined by the beloved veteran Joyce Castle; Manahan. (Oct. 27 at 1:30.) (New York State Theatre. 212-721-6500.)

LES ARTS FLORISSANTS: "IL SANT'ALESSIO"

This 1631 opera, composed by the papal favorite Stefano Landi, occupies a strange place in the repertory: not only is it the first opera to be based on a historical subject but its cast features roles for nine countertenors. Philippe Jaroussky leads the pack in this rare semi-staged production offered by William Christie's incomparable Baroque company. (Rose Theatre, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500. Oct. 29-30 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC

Christoph von Dohnányi, the erudite former paragon of the Cleveland Orchestra, is a longtime advocate of the rigorous British modernist Harrison Birtwistle; he leads the first Philharmonic performances of Birtwistle's "Night's Black Bird" as an introduction to a program that continues with two audience favorites, Sibelius's Violin Concerto (with Nikolaj Znaider) and Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. Oct. 24-25 at 7:30 and Oct. 27 at 8.)

ORCHESTRA OF ST. LUKE'S

On the basis of a recent Sony Classical recording devoted to his works, the sixteen-year-old musical phenom Jay Greenberg has the technical skills of a professional composer but not yet the voice with which to mold them to a compelling purpose. Perhaps his Violin Concerto, which the appealing violinist Joshua Bell will première, will be his breakthrough. Bell also performs Barber's lovely Violin Concerto on a program that features works by Joan Tower and Haydn (the buoyant Symphony No. 93 in D Major). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Oct. 28 at 2.)

ST. PETERSBURG PHILHARMONIC

Yuri Temirkanov leads this more elegant and exacting competitor to Valery Gergiev's Kirov Orchestra, its home-town rival. In the first of three concerts at Carnegie Hall, he conducts music by Mozart, Beethoven (the Violin Concerto, with Julia Fischer), and Prokofiev (the coruscating Fifth Symphony). (212-247-7800. Oct. 30 at 8.)

RECITALS

ANDRÁS SCHIFF

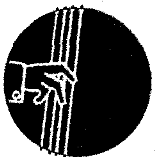
The Hungarian pianist, whose intellectual yet expressive style has a maverick streak within its fabric, is launching a two-year survey of the complete Beethoven sonatas at Carnegie Hall. In the second of two concerts this week, he offers performances of the Sonatas Nos. 5, 6, 7, and 8 (the "Pathétique"). (212-247-7800. Oct. 24 at 8.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER

The society expands its intimate Rose Studio Concerts to double concerts this season; the latest program features Schubert's capacious Octet in F Major, performed by a group that includes the violinists Susie Park and Joseph Silverstein and the bassoonist Peter Kolkay. (Rose Building, Lincoln Center. 212-875-5788. Oct. 25 at 6:30 and 9:30.)

THEATRE OF VOICES

No choral conductor leads his charges on more daring jaunts than Paul Hillier, who directs this expert



CLASSICAL NOTES
RIO LIFE

Thanks to such hits as "Corcovado" and "The Girl from Ipanema," the Brazilian songwriter Antônio Carlos Jobim is known to millions of eager bachelors. But in the suave and expert hands of the guitarists Sérgio and Odair Assad, his countrymen, the works sound more like South American Schubert: exquisite miniatures of ardent desire and ineffable regret. **"Jardim Abandonado,"** one of four Jobim treasures, is the title track of the Assad brothers' new album (on Nonesuch).

The duo-guitar arrangements give all the pieces, whether popular or classical, an intimate sense of tonal richness and a new range of scintillating colors. Jobim's bossa-nova beachfront is suddenly a forest of dark shadows and strange cries; two selections from the clangorous two-piano suite "Scaramouche," by Milhaud, become mellow drops of sunshine. The pièce de résistance is a transcription of "Rhapsody in Blue." Instead of the crazy energy of Manhattan, we get the sultry glamour of Rio de Janeiro; phrases lunge passionately forward, only to gracefully skip back.

It's no insult to the Assads' wonderful playing to think of their album as high-class easy listening. **"Asturiana,"** an appealing disk (on ECM) on which the violist Kim Kashkashian and the pianist Robert Levin perform transcriptions of stirring songs by Spanish and Argentinean composers such as Granados, Guastavino, and Falla ("Seven Spanish Folk Songs"), is a similar product: Kashkashian's phrasings are both fervent and detailed, and Levin's playing is limpid and assured. The Argentinean-American composer Osvaldo Golijov delves joyously into the Hispanic and Hebraic folk music of his heritage, but **"Oceana,"** a cantata based on sensuous texts by Pablo Neruda, which gives its name to a new recording of Golijov's music (on Deutsche Grammophon), is a work of rare seriousness and equipoise, composed four years before the explosive "Pasión Según San Marcos" made him an international star. Golijov is lucky to have such committed interpreters as the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, the conductor Robert Spano, and the bossa-nova princess Luciana Souza; "Tenebrae" and "Three Songs," offered by the Kronos Quartet and the soprano Dawn Upshaw, respectively, are just as rewarding to hear.

—Russell Platt

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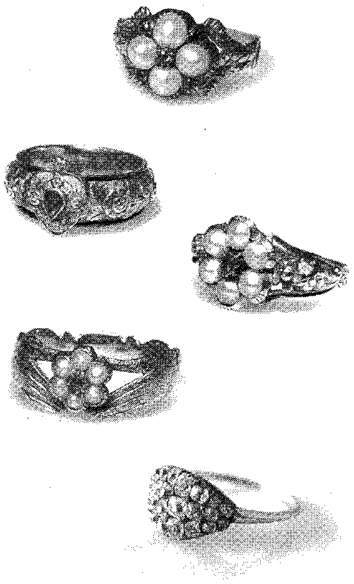

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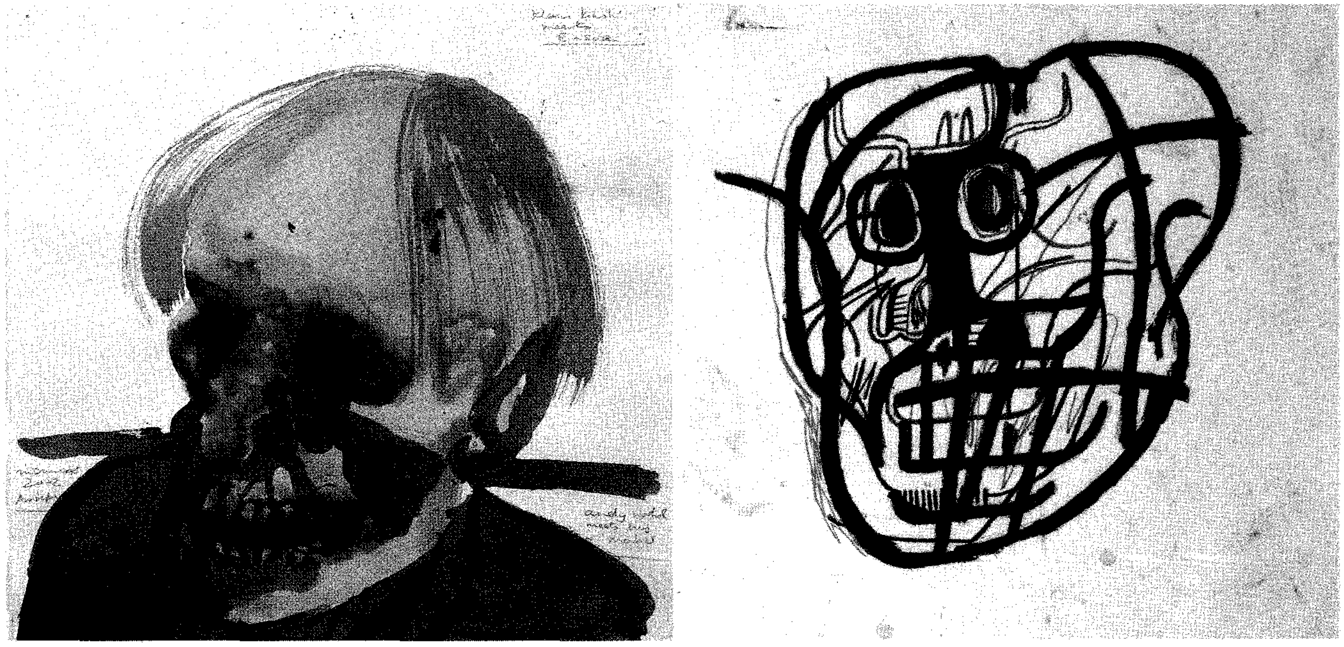
little ensemble. Their upcoming Zankel Hall program features works by Berio ("A-Ronne," a classic), Sheldon Frank, and the irrepressible David Lang (the world première of "The Little Match Girl Passion"). (212-247-7800. Oct. 25 at 7:30.)

ANGELA HEWITT
Concentration and finesse are the hallmarks of this admired Canadian pianist, who will offer Books I and II, respectively, of Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier in two performances at Zankel Hall. (212-247-7800. Oct. 26 at 7:30 and Oct. 28 at 2.)

MILLER THEATRE COMPOSER PORTRAITS: DAVID SANFORD
The African-American composer, who blends the energy of hip-hop with Princetonian classical training, conducts his "big band," the Pittsburgh Collective (along with a notable guest, the cellist Matt Haimovitz), in a concert featuring a selection of his works. (Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799. Oct. 26 at 8.)

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM: "ITZHAK PERLMAN PLAYS CHAMBER MUSIC"
The world's favorite violinist presides over an evening with several of his protégés that will feature performances of music by Mozart, Steve Reich (the Triple Quartet), and Tchaikovsky. (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. Oct. 27 at 8.)



Marlene Dumas's watercolor "Klaus Kinski Meets Ensor, Andy Warhol Meets His Maker" and Jean-Michel Basquiat's painting "Untitled (Skull)" are among the works in "I Am as You Will Be," currently at Cheim & Read.

TOKYO STRING QUARTET
The smartly poised and richly experienced ensemble returns to the 92nd Street Y to perform works by Haydn, Lera Auerbach (a première), and Tchaikovsky (the plangent Third Quartet). (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Oct. 27 at 8.)

THE NEWBERRY CONSORT: "SHAKESPEARE'S SONGBOOK"
Music Before 1800 presents the superb ensemble (featuring the soprano Ellen Hargis and the lutenist Paul O'Dette), which will offer settings of the Bard's words by such composers as Morley, Dowland, and Cornish. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 212-666-9266. Oct. 28 at 4.)

MET CHAMBER ENSEMBLE
In an event that will enliven new-music intermission chatter for decades to come, James Levine's deluxe band offers a concert crowned by a performance of "Histoire du Soldat," with the speaking parts read by three compositional eminences: Elliott Carter, Milton Babbitt, and John Harbison. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Oct. 28 at 5.)

JORDI SAVALL AND LE CONCERT DES NATIONS
The magnificent Catalan gambist's period ensemble turns its attention to performances of the courtly music of the French ancien régime—works by Lully, Charpentier, Couperin, and Leclair. (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. Oct. 29 at 7:30.)

"THE SONGS OF CHARLES IVES"
Old Blues hardly need an excuse to gather for an impromptu reunion, but the "Yale at Carnegie" series provides an especially distinctive one. The mezzo-soprano Tamara Mumford and the tenor Ryan MacPherson, among others, will perform thirty-seven seldom heard selections by New Haven's favorite musical alumnus. (Weill Recital Hall. 212-247-7800. Oct. 29 at 8.)

MOVIES OPENING

BEFORE THE DEVIL KNOWS YOU'RE DEAD
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Oct. 26. (In wide release.)

BELLA
A romantic drama, directed by Alejandro Monteverde, about a soccer star (Eduardo Verástegui) who meets a waitress (Tammy Blanchard) in New York. In English and Spanish. Opening Oct. 26. (Empire 25 and Union Square.)

DAN IN REAL LIFE
In this romantic comedy, directed by Peter Hedges, an advice columnist and widower (Steve Carell) falls in love with his brother's girlfriend (Juliette Binoche). Co-starring Dane Cook, Emily Blunt, and Dianne Wiest. Opening Oct. 26. (In wide release.)

JIMMY CARTER MAN FROM PLAINS
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening Oct. 26. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

LYNCH
A documentary portrait of David Lynch, directed by a filmmaker called blackANDwhite. Opening Oct. 26. (IFC Center.)

MR. UNTOUCHABLE
Marc Levin directed this documentary, about the onetime heroin kingpin Nicky Barnes. Opening Oct. 26. (Cinema Village and Empire 25.)

MUSIC WITHIN
A drama, directed by Steven Sawalich, about a musician who loses his hearing in the Vietnam War and becomes an activist for the disabled. Starring Ron Livingston, Melissa George, and Michael Sheen. Opening Oct. 26. (In limited release.)

PETE SEEGER: POWER OF SONG
A documentary about the folksinger, directed by Jim Brown. Opening Oct. 26. (IFC Center.)

RAILS AND TIES
Alison Eastwood (daughter of Clint) directed this drama, about a boy who bonds with the conductor of a train that killed the boy's suicidal mother. Starring Miles Heizer, Kevin Bacon, and Marcia Gay Harden. Opening Oct. 26. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.)

SAW IV
Darren Lynn Bousman directed this horror sequel, starring Justin Louis, Shawnee Smith, and Tobin Bell. Opening Oct. 26. (In wide release.)

SLIPSTREAM
Anthony Hopkins wrote, directed, and stars in this drama, about an actor and screenwriter whose characters show up in his life. Co-starring Stella Arroyave and Christian Slater. Opening Oct. 26. (Empire 25.)

NOW PLAYING

CONTROL
Given the sound and the fury that emanated from Joy Division, the British rock band of the late nineteen-seventies, you might expect that a movie about their rise to fame and the despairing fall of their lead singer, Ian Curtis (Sam Riley), would be an unwatchable affair. But somehow Anton Corbijn's film summons zest, gloomy humor, and surprising tenderness as it recounts the tale of its hero in the North of England: his adolescence (which was steeped in David Bowie), his early marriage to a local girl named Deborah (Samantha Morton), the record contracts, and the terror of his epileptic fits. The movie refuses to mythologize Curtis; indeed, the tearing of his heart between the loyal Deborah and a beautiful Belgian fan (Alexandra Maria Lara) feels like a universal plight. Still, once Riley takes the microphone, we realize all too vividly what the fuss was about, and how the myth began. In glorious black-and-white.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 10/15/07.) (Film Forum.)

THE DARJEELING LIMITED
The new Wes Anderson film shows that his fixation on families, and on the ties that bind them, continues unabated. Three brothers, played by Adrien Brody, Jason Schwartzman, and Owen Wilson, meet up on a slow train rattling across India. They are mourning the death of their father, planning a vague pilgrimage to their mother (Anjelica Huston), who has herself moved to Asia, and trying to repair their fellowship. The movie

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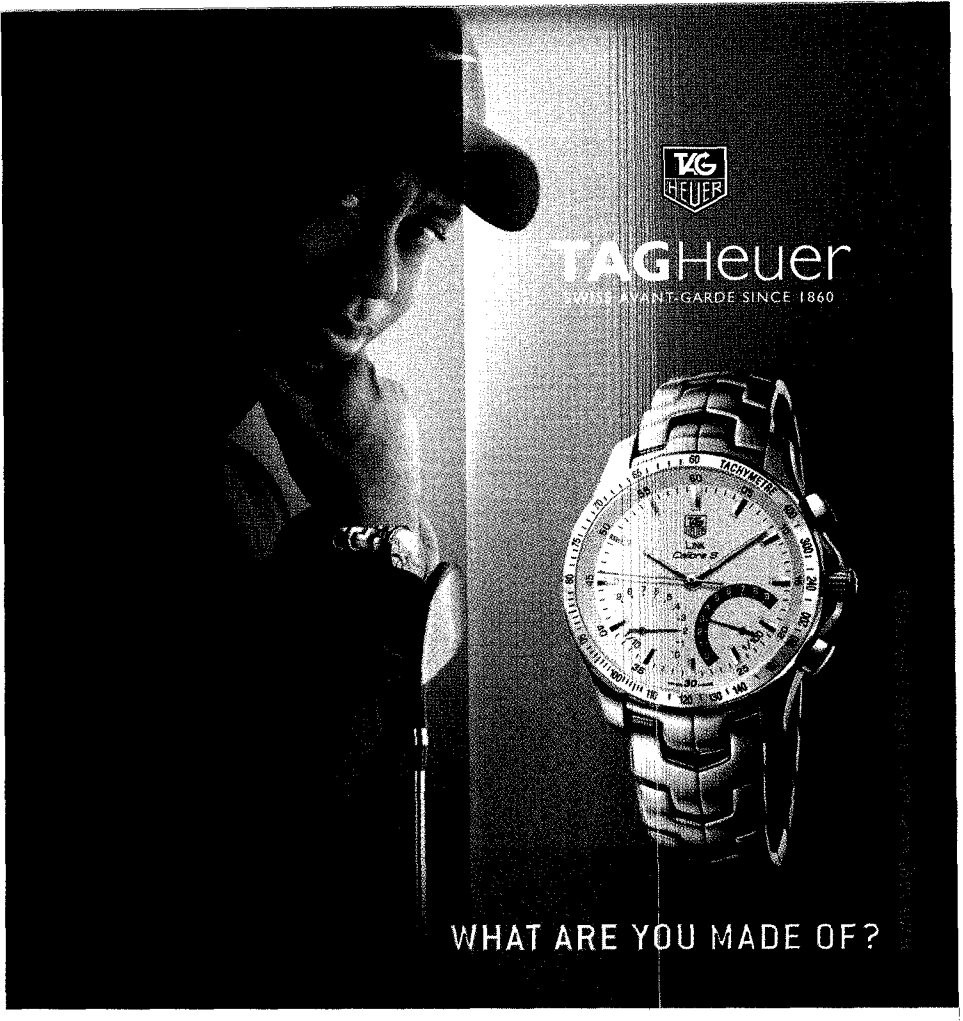
steams with minor resentments and misunderstandings that slowly evaporate in the warm-colored, calmative surroundings of an unfamiliar land. It is easy to be exasperated by the brothers' pettiness, but Anderson is one of the few contemporary directors with the nerve to insist that the blandishments of style—in his case, stately tracking shots, sudden romantic songs, and twitchy running gags—can lend form and grace to even the most discontented lives. With a fine opening cameo from Bill Murray, which leaves you wanting more.—*A.L.* (10/15/07) (In wide release.)

ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE
Cate Blanchett, Geoffrey Rush, and the director Shekhar Kapur reunite for the second chapter of a planned trilogy about the life of the sixteenth-century English Queen who sacrificed personal happiness for the good of her country. The title is misleading; the movie is concerned with the bloody actions that were a prelude to England's golden age. Here, Elizabeth is the warrior queen, and the various plots of the film—her unrequited love for Walter Raleigh (Clive Owen), her country's war with the mighty Spanish Armada, and the assassination attempt by her rival and cousin, Mary Stuart (a scene-stealing Samantha Morton)—are thrown together like a shoddy patchwork. Where the earlier film's court intrigues were delivered with a sharp tongue, this poorly written installment has a soap-opera feel that dilutes any tension. Great care has been paid to the costuming, but the drama, like the over-the-top score, substitutes bombast for finesse.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

GONE, BABY, GONE
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In wide release.)

THE HEARTBREAK KID
The Farrelly brothers' extroverted remake of Elaine May's anxious 1972 comedy, about a man who falls in love with another woman while on his honeymoon, is painfully unfunny yet oddly enjoyable. As Eddie Cantrow, the "sporting-goods schmo" who finds he has married in haste, Ben Stiller does his beleaguered-Everyman routine with energy. Malin Akerman, as the bride whose emerging foibles bring trouble, and Michelle Monaghan, as the available charmer at the resort, hold up their ends. But it's the Farrellys' revisions to the familiar tale that make the film run. Where the earlier version featured Cybill Shepherd as the irresistible shiksa goddess, Monaghan plays not a pinup but a soul mate—indeed, Akerman is the prettier of the two, and her sexual voracity turns Eddie off. But the key to the story is a new pair of characters—Eddie's father, a raunchy seventy-seven-year-old satyr, played by Jerry Stiller, and Eddie's best friend (Rob Corddry), a henpecked young husband—who, like a cartoon devil and angel on Eddie's shoulders, induce him to leap blindly into wedlock. Though the Farrelly brothers' vulgar humor has turned acrid and forced, as if to catch up with currents that passed them by, their notion of manhood and its pitfalls holds the attention.—*Richard Brody* (In wide release.)

INTO THE WILD
Sean Penn wrote and directed this adaptation of Jon Krakauer's chastely written 1996 book about Christopher Johnson McCandless, the Emory University graduate who, at the age of twenty-two, cut all ties with his family and friends, tramped around the country, and then headed north into the wilds of Alaska, where he died, alone, in August, 1992. A single-minded asceticism drove McCandless to his fate; Penn shoots the movie, however, in a facile, commercially lyrical style—he can't stop swirling around mountaintops, as if he were selling S.U.V.s. As the young man (played by Emile Hirsch) travels about, he attracts the interest of a South Dakota wheat farmer (Vince Vaughn, playing it straight), an aging hippie (Catherine Keener), and a retired Army man living on the edge of the California desert (Hal Holbrook), all of whom ask him to put down his backpack and stay. He always leaves, and it may be hard for some of us to take his ambitions as seriously as Penn does. McCandless didn't experience enough of life for his rejection of it to carry much weight, and Penn can't see the egocentricity in a revolt that was as naïve as it was grandly self-destructive.—*David Denby* (10/8/07) (In wide release.)



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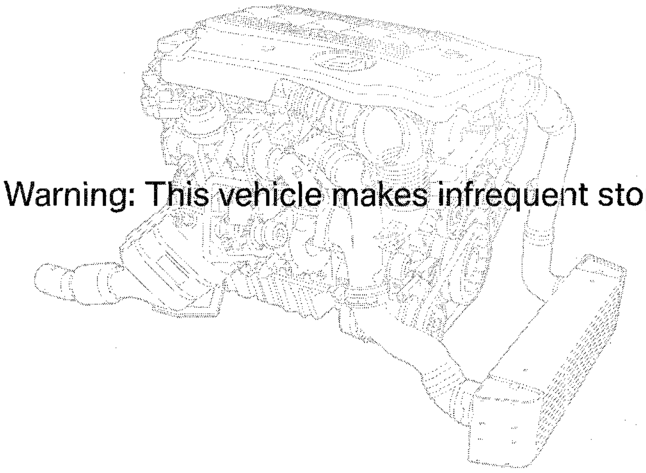

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JE T'AIME . . . MOI NON PLUS: CRITICS AND ARTISTS

The actress Maria de Medeiros filmed this documentary, about the conflicted relations of critics and directors, at the 2002 Cannes festival, and worked with the talent on hand. She scooped up sound bites from a flotilla of international art-house directors, including Ken Loach, Pedro Almodóvar, Elia Suleiman, David Cronenberg, Wim Wenders, and, most important, the remarkable nonagenarian Manoel de Oliveira, whose wise meditations on his own artistic methods are matched by his grateful regard for criticism that "penetrates a film and explains it to the director himself." Other filmmakers, less serene in their status, spew bile and derision at critics; in turn, many of the critics interviewed (the selection has a distinct Franco-Iberian slant) strut their privilege before the camera with a stunning lack of humility. Yet a Spanish critic recalls colleagues who defended films from censorship under Franco, and an Argentinean director grimly cites the physical dangers that filmmakers face "in countries where there's no rule of law." Though Medeiros's modest, chatty film is far from the last word on the subject, it's a terrific conversation-starter.—*R.B.* (BAM; Oct. 26.)

JIMMY CARTER MAN FROM PLAINS

The director Jonathan Demme gets unfettered access to former President Jimmy Carter on his tour for his controversial book "Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid," which has been seen by many as a pro-Palestinian, anti-Israeli look at the Middle East crisis. The tour gives Demme a perfect opportunity to record Carter's wide-ranging observations on the American cultural landscape. There are no polemics here, and although the storm around Carter's book is given room to be heard, Demme is more concerned with showing the man's undeniable warmth and intelligence. The documentary offers a healthy, stimulating view of political opinion, but its most affecting elements are the small moments that Demme captures—a frail Carter, in the company of Secret Service agents, carrying his own bags into a hotel, or a short conversation that Carter has with a little girl whose name reminds him of his favorite poet. Carter's total immersion in his work, at the age of eighty-two, and his unflagging need to make a difference give the film an admirable power.—*B.D.* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

THE KINGDOM

After a murderous attack on an American compound in Riyadh, a covert team of F.B.I. agents—Jamie Foxx, Jennifer Garner, Chris Cooper, and Jason Bateman—is flown in, against the wishes of the State Department, to explore the crime. There are severe restrictions on their activities in Saudi Arabia, although, thanks to the cunning of the writer, Matthew Michael Carnahan, and the director, Peter Berg, these are quietly lifted, allowing our heroes to round off the movie in a noisy blaze of firepower. Berg shows his skill at orchestrating these brassy scenes, so much so that you almost forget the absurdities of the plot (was it wise to send a female forensic scientist to a Muslim country?) and almost forgive the hard-nosed vengefulness of the whole enterprise. Wait for the final line: it's clever and loaded, and it makes the movie seem far more poised and pensive than it actually is. With a fine performance by Ashraf Barhom as the Saudi investigator.—*A.L.* (10/1/07) (In wide release.)

LARS AND THE REAL GIRL

Ryan Gosling gives a beautifully understated performance as a socially phobic man who believes that a sex doll is his girlfriend. The film takes place in a wintry Midwestern town filled with the kindest people imaginable, and the director, Craig Gillespie, uses a Capra-esque shorthand to bring to life a story in which understanding and decency are idealized to fable-like proportions. As the townfolk buy into the lead character's delusion and adopt the doll as one of their own (inviting it to parties, hiring it to do community service), the emotional directness of Nancy Oliver's screenplay gently tugs the film's charming spirits over the deeper, disturbing psychic troubles that lie beneath the surface. The result is ridiculous but effective.—*B.D.* (Angelika Film Center and Paris.)

LUST, CAUTION

The beautiful stone buildings and mahogany interiors of post-colonial Shanghai cast a heavy, voluptuous spell in Ang Lee's adaptation of Eileen Chang's story of sex and espionage in the city during the Second World War. Tang Wei, a former model and a prodigious young actress, plays a member of a political-theatre group that carries its playacting into active resistance to the Japanese occupation. Pretending to be a married sophisticate, the girl enters the circle of Mr. Yee (Tony Leung), a high-placed Chinese collaborator and nemesis of the resistance, and finds herself both attracted to and repelled by him. Lee's staging of the bruising erotic scenes is incomparably powerful, but the meetings and actions of the resistance (presumably under Communist Party discipline) are not very convincing. The movie dawdles and repeats itself unconscionably—it lacks drive and, except for the sex scenes, a tinge of wildness. Shot by Rodrigo Prieto on sets constructed in Shanghai. Wang Hui-Ling and James Schamus wrote the screenplay. In Mandarin.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

MEETING RESISTANCE

In this powerful, fascinating documentary, the journalists Molly Bingham and Steve Connors present a complex overview of the Iraqi resistance against the American military presence in Iraq. Playing like a superb television news special, the film, shot in 2003-04, shows interviews with several Iraqi resistance fighters (their identities are obscured for their protection), interspersed with intimate footage of neighborhood bombings and their aftermaths. The result is an acute demonstration of how differing ideologies have converged on one goal: to show the coalition forces that they are not wanted in Iraq. While some interviewees are self-proclaimed religious jihadists who value martyrdom above all, others explain that, although they are Sunni, they have Shia relatives in their extended family and, in any case, no loyalty to Saddam Hussein's Baath Party. A large number of combatants are not religious zealots but nationalists who are attempting to overcome the shame they feel in the occupation by fighting for their dignity, their honor, their identity, and, ultimately, their country.—*Shauna Lyon* (Cinema Village.)

MICHAEL CLAYTON

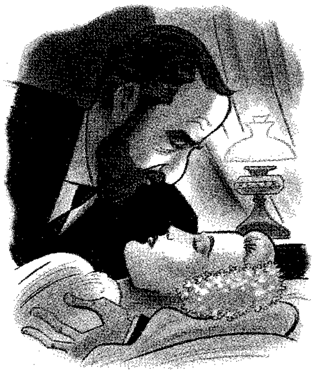
A gabby, irresistibly entertaining New York thriller. Michael Clayton (George Clooney), a law-firm fixer of dubious ethics, is dispatched to rein in the firm's chief litigator (Tom Wilkinson), a high-strung guy who has discovered a document that incriminates one of the firm's clients and has responded by going off his meds and out of his mind. Michael, it turns out, is only slightly less disgusted by the dirty business than the litigator is, and the movie catches him during a period of four frantic days in which all the strains in his life are pushing him to the breaking point. The screenwriter Tony Gilroy both wrote and directed the movie, and he keeps the tension level high—too high at times; the movie needs to breathe more. Yet the inside-the-law-firm chatter and poker-table badinage come off superbly. Clooney, looking a little haggard, gives a lovely performance as a smart man who has a few too many scruples to be a winner. With Tilda Swinton and Sydney Pollack. Cinematography by Robert Elswit.—*D.D.* (10/8/07) (In wide release.)

RENDITION

Gavin Hood's drama is centered on Douglas Freeman (Jake Gyllenhaal), a C.I.A. agent stationed in North Africa, who becomes the reluctant overseer of a clandestine interrogation. When a suspected accomplice to terrorism, Anwar El-Ibrahimi (Omar Metwally), an Egyptian-American chemical engineer, doesn't return home from South Africa, his pregnant wife, Isabella (Reese Witherspoon), sets out to find him, with the help of a senator's aide, Alan (Peter Sarsgaard), and no help at all from Corrine Whitman (Meryl Streep), the C.I.A.'s head of anti-terrorism. Meanwhile, Anwar's interrogator, Abasi Fawal (Yigal Naor), fights with Douglas over how much torture is too much. In spite of the film's melodramatic, slightly self-righteous air, some of the performances are strong, especially that of Gyllenhaal, who brings soul to a potentially stereotypical role.—*S.L.* (In wide release.)

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
A CHANGE OF HABIT

There's nothing more joyous than discovering that a film that was shocking in one's youth still has the power to make one cringe. Luis Buñuel's "Viridiana," from 1961, is certainly not his greatest movie—it's obvious at times, and repetitive—but, if you fear blasphemy and entertain any hope for the Christian redemption of the downtrodden, this is the jolt you need. In the first half, Viridiana (Silvia Pinal), a beautiful novitiate, visits her wealthy uncle (Fernando Rey) in the Spanish countryside and confronts his sexual fetishes; in the second, Viridiana gathers the scrofulous local beggars onto her uncle's property, which she now shares with her powerfully attractive cousin (Francisco Rabal). The rabble take over the house, and, to the sound of the "Hallelujah" Chorus, despoil everything in sight, including one another. The movie is a very elaborate dirty joke in which one can find, amid the mocking ironies and cruelties, a defiant celebration of sexuality as the only redemption God ever offered to his flock. Playing at MOMA on Oct. 25 and Oct. 31.



—*David Denby*

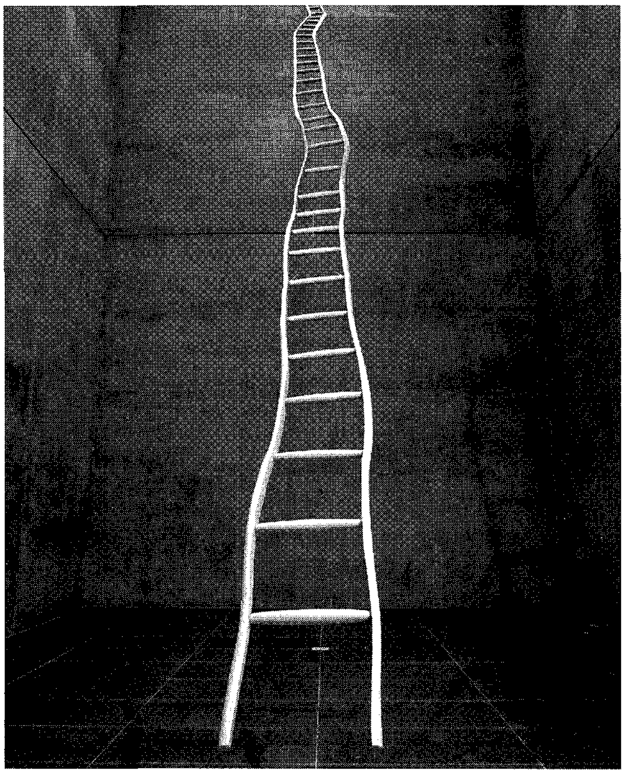
RESERVATION ROAD
The writer-director Terry George ("Hotel Rwanda") plumbs the depths of grief in this gloomy thriller, which he adapted with John Burnham Schwartz from Schwartz's novel. The perfectly happy Ethan (Joaquin Phoenix) and Grace (Jennifer Connelly) lose their ten-year-old son when Dwight (Mark Ruffalo), a divorced father, hits him with his S.U.V. and, after a moment of hesitation, drives away. In an attempt to portray the full extent of the family's mourning and to capture the full horror of the unjust tragedy, the writers, through their formulaic, humorless script, hit the same notes repeatedly, and even the talented Phoenix and Ruffalo can't elevate the proceedings.—*S.L.* (In wide release.)

THE ROAD HOME
As an eighteen-year-old Chinese village girl in 1958 who is determined to marry the new schoolteacher even though he's a city boy and supposedly out of her class, Zhang Ziyi, in a phenomenal movie début, gives an unself-consciously dazzling and lyrical performance. Her embodiment of such girlish emotions as curiosity-streaked ardor and such womanly ones as do-or-die willfulness enables her director, Zhang Yimou, to eschew melodramatic inflation while crafting a visually eloquent tribute to rural life. In the framing story, the couple's son, a city engineer, returns to the country after his father's death. His mother wants some of their male neighbors to carry the body on foot from a distant hospital so that her husband will remember the road home for eternity. As the film moves from a gray-and-white present to an enveloping golden vision of the village four decades earlier, Zhang Yimou patiently and surely creates a fable in which devotion overcomes both timeless obstacles and the political crackdowns of Mao Zedong. In Mandarin. Released in 1999.—*Michael Sragow* (Rubin Museum of Art; Oct. 26.)

ROMANCE & CIGARETTES
Why do the cheesiest pop tunes make the most effective soundtrack songs? Here the culprit is Engelbert Humperdinck's "A Man Without Love," the first number in the director John Turturro's inspired and stimulating quasi-musical creation. James Gandolfini plays Nick, an ironworker who lives in Queens with his wife (Susan Sarandon) and three daughters (the quirkily cast Mary-Louise Parker, Aida Turturro, and Mandy Moore) but is in the throes of a surprising affair with the hotter-than-hot Tula (Kate Winslet, in an astoundingly lascivious and funny performance). Turturro has his actors sing along with the recorded voices, and the effect is surreal and touching—they all appear to be having the time of their lives. With matching witty, working-class choreography by Tricia Brouk.—*Ken Marks* (In limited release.)

TERROR'S ADVOCATE
Barbet Schroeder's engrossing yet appalling documentary portrait of the French attorney Jacques Vergès, who enthusiastically represented Klaus Barbie, Carlos the Jackal, and other figures of political horror, is about much more than one man's delusions. The film traces Vergès's life and work (with his vigorous participation), from the racial discrimination he faced in his youth (his mother was from Vietnam, his father from Réunion) to his first major case, the defense of the Algerian militant Djamila Bouhired, who planted a bomb in an Algiers café in 1956, killing eleven people. Saving Bouhired from the death penalty by mobilizing international sympathy, Vergès then married her and avoided politics until the mid-sixties, when he represented Palestinian terrorists and became a Maoist. Then, after dropping out of sight for a few years, he worked for the Baader-Meinhof gang and other agents of destruction. With probing interviews, intrepid legwork, and sharp editing, Schroeder exposes an underground network that hijacked the anti-colonialist movement from behind the Iron Curtain with the help of unregenerated Nazis and other anti-liberals. With regret, he locates the roots of international terrorism in the ruthless tactics of Algerian independence fighters. The story that Schroeder unfolds is not just Vergès's but also his own, that of a generation that had its humanistic sympathies manipulated and abused by radically unscrupulous people with agendas of horror. In French, German, English, Arabic, and Khmer.—*R.B.* (IFC Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

MAURICE VELEKOOP



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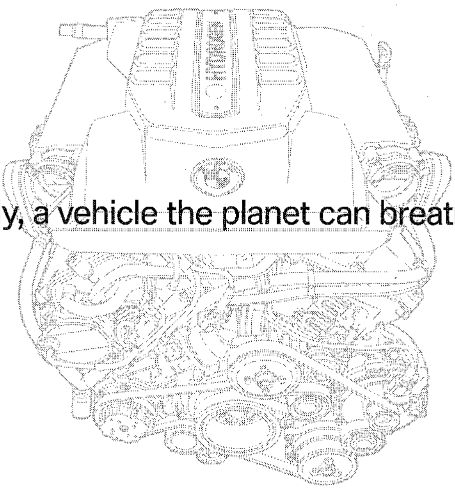
Martin Puryear. *Ladder for Booker T. Washington*. 1996. Ash and maple wood. Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth. Gift of Ruth Carter Stevenson by exchange. Photo by David Wharton. © 2007 Martin Puryear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TWO PLAYERS FROM THE BENCH
The Croatian writer-director Dejan Šorak has made what the West calls black comedy and the Balkans call life. Agents of the Croatian government lure a Croat and kidnap a Serb to serve as look-alike stand-ins for a pair of vanished witnesses who could exculpate a Croatian colonel who is accused of war crimes, locking the two in a safe house so that they can invent their own backstories and rehearse their testimony. Though a few gags run like Abbott and Costello in the killing fields, the hearty performances bring the droll, twisty, and politically audacious story to life. Uniting his pair of hapless heroes through language, cuisine, culture, and intermarriage, Šorak alludes nostalgically to the former Yugoslavia—the one place where Yugoslavs couldn't live together. In Serbo-Croatian.—*R.B.* (Walter Reade; Oct. 26-27 and Oct. 29.)

Steve Carell and Juliette Binoche star in the comedy "Dan in Real Life."

DIVYA SRINIVASAN

WE OWN THE NIGHT
The new film by James Gray feels like a companion piece to "The Yards," his earlier, equally dark saga of crime and domestic discord in New York. Both films star Joaquin Phoenix and Mark Wahlberg; in the first film, they played best friends, and this time they're brothers—closer in blood but painfully divided by the course of their lives. Bobby (Phoenix) runs a night club, while Joseph (Wahlberg), following in the stern footsteps of their father (Robert Duvall), is a Brooklyn cop. When Bobby is asked to help entrap a Russian drug lord, he finds himself being pulled away from the good times (this is 1988) and back into his family, to the dismay of his girlfriend, Amada (Eva Mendes). The moral motion of the film is fairly simple—the return, and redemption, of a prodigal son—but Gray steeps his tale in murky complication, and the staging of every scene, be it downbeat or frantic, is so assured that you barely notice the implausibilities. (Bobby and Joseph, for instance, hardly look like brothers.) The rain-drenched car chase, halfway through, is reason enough to see the film.—*A.L.* (10/22/07) (In wide release.)

Also Playing

THE COMEBACKS: In wide release. **THINGS WE LOST IN THE FIRE:** In wide release. **30 DAYS OF NIGHT:** In wide release. **WHY DID I GET MARRIED?:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—Special screening. Oct. 24 at 8: "Helen Hill Memorial," a program of short films by Hill. ♦ Oct. 26-28 at 8: "Up and Out" (1998, Christian Marclay). The Oct. 26 screening will be followed by a discussion with the critic Amy Taubin and the filmmaker. ♦ "Confessions of a Hoaxer: The World of Alan Abel." Oct. 25 at 7: "Abel Raises Cain" (2005, Jenny Abel and Jeff Hockett), introduced by the directors. ♦ Oct. 26 at 7: "Alan Abel—Professional Media Prankster," a program of film clips, introduced by Abel. ♦ Oct. 27 at 7: "Is There Sex After Death?" (1971, Alan Abel and Jeanne Abel), introduced by the directors. ♦ Oct. 28 at 7: "The Faking of the President" (1974, Alan Abel and Jeanne Abel), introduced by the directors. ♦ "Czech Currents." Oct. 25 at 8: "Restart" (2005, Julius Ševčik; in Czech). ♦ "Essential Cinema." Oct. 27 at 4:30: "Arabic Series 0-10" (1980-81, Stan Brakhage). ♦ Oct. 28 at 4:30: "Arabic Series 11-19" (1981, Brakhage).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—New French films. All films are in French. Oct. 24 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:30: "Very Well, Thank You" (2007, Emmanuelle Cuau). ♦ Oct. 25 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Demented" (2006, Laurent Achard). ♦ Oct. 26 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:40: "Je T'Aime . . . Moi Non Plus: Critics and Artists" (†). The 6:50 screening will be followed by a panel discussion with the critics Dave Kehr, Dennis Lim, Melissa Anderson, and others. ♦ Oct. 27 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:30: "Anna M." (2007, Michel Spinosa). ♦ Oct. 28 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "The Betrayal" (2006, Philippe Faucon). ♦ "Jonathan Lethem Selects." Oct. 29 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Ruggles of Red Gap" (1935, Leo McCarey). ♦ "Stanwyck Redux." Oct. 30 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "The Miracle Woman" (1931, Frank Capra).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. Oct. 24-Nov. 1 (call for showtimes): "War and Peace" (1968, Sergei Bondarchuk; in Russian).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE
Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—"Alexandre Desplat: A Visionary Composer." Oct. 30 at 12:30, 4, and 7: "Read My Lips" (2001, Jacques Audiard; in French). The 7 P.M. screening will be introduced by Desplat.

IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—In revival. Oct. 26-28 at noon: "Monsoon Wedding" (2001, Mira Nair; in English, Hindi, Punjabi, and Urdu). ♦ "Stranger Than Fiction," a documentary series. Oct. 30 at 7:30: "Big Rig" (2007, Doug Pray), introduced by the director.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—Through Nov. 5: "Spain (Un)Censored."

All films are in Spanish. Oct. 24 at 6 and Oct. 28 at 5:30: "Main Street" (1956, Juan Antonio Bardem). ♦ Oct. 24 at 8 and Oct. 29 at 6: "The Delinquents" (1959, Carlos Saura). ♦ Oct. 25 at 6: "Viridiana" (1961, Luis Buñuel). ♦ Oct. 25 at 8: "The Strange Trip" (1964, Fernando Fernán Gómez). ♦ Oct. 26-27 at 6: "Furrows" (1951, José Antonio Nieves Conde). ♦ Oct. 26 at 8: "The Hunt" (1965, Saura). ♦ Oct. 27 at 2: "From Pink . . . to Yellow" (1963, Manuel Summers). ♦ Oct. 27 at 4: "The Cuenca Crime" (1979, Pilar Miró). ♦ Oct. 28 at 2:30: "Death of a Cyclist" (1955, Bardem). ♦ Oct. 29 at 8: "The Little Flat" (1958, Marco Ferreri). ♦ Special screenings. Oct. 24 at 6:15 and 8:30: "Cinerama Adventure" (2002, David Strohmaier). ♦ Oct. 25 at 6:30: Short films by Kevin Everson. ♦ Oct. 29 at 7: "Side/Walk/Shuttle" (1991, Ernie Gehr) and "Serene Velocity" (1970, Gehr). ♦ "Film on Film." Oct. 25 at 8:30: Short films, including "You Only Live Once: Production Takes from a Film in the Making" (1937, Fritz Lang). ♦ Oct. 26 at 6:30: "The Language of the Silent Cinema" (1973, compiled by Vlada Petric).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Nov. 11: The films of Andy Warhol. Oct. 27 at 1:30: "Vinyl" (1965) and an excerpt from "Empire" (1964). ♦ Oct. 27 at 4: "Kitchen" (1965) and "Beauty #2" (1965). ♦ Oct. 27 at 7: "Camp" (1965) and "The Velvet Underground and Nico" (1965). ♦ Oct. 28 at 7: "Poor Little Rich Girl" (1965) and "I, a Man" (1967).

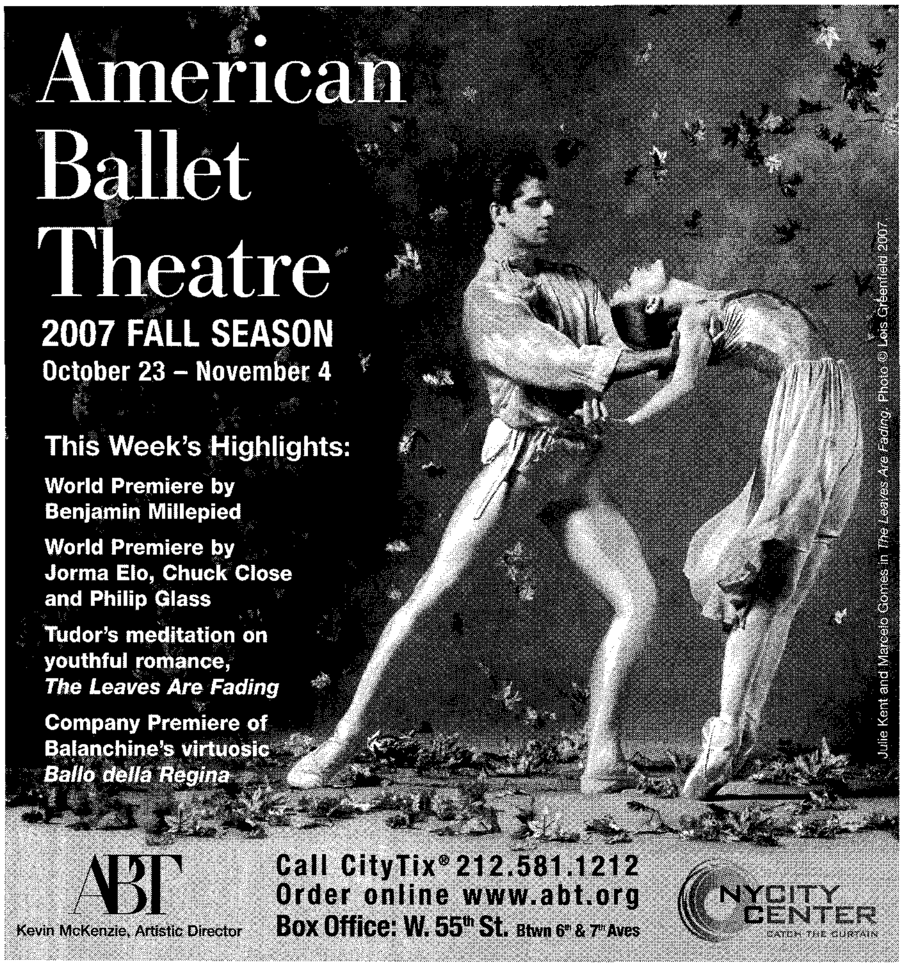
PALEY CENTER FOR MEDIA
25 W. 52nd St. (212-621-6800)—Through Nov. 1: "DocFest07," a series of new documentaries. For complete program, visit www.paleycenter.org. Oct. 24 at 7: "To Die in Jerusalem" (2007, Hilla Medalia), followed by a Q. & A. with the filmmaker and Ambassador Dennis Ross. ♦ Oct. 25 at 7: "Sputnik Mania" (2007, David Hoffman), followed by a Q. & A. with the director. ♦ Oct. 26 at 7: "Larry Flynt: The Right to Be Left Alone" (2007, Joan Brooker-Marks), followed by a Q. & A. with the filmmaker, Flynt, and others. ♦ Oct. 30 at 7: "Amazing Journey: The Story of The Who" (2007, Paul Crowder and Murray Lerner), introduced by Roger Daltrey and Pete Townshend.

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART
150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000)—"Cabaret Cinema." Oct. 26 at 9:30: "The Road Home" (†), introduced by the writer David N. Meyer.

SCANDINAVIA HOUSE
58 Park Ave., at 38th St. (212-847-9779)—Through Dec. 15: "A Celebration of Danish Cinema: Nordisk Film at 100." Oct. 24 at 6:30 and Oct. 27 at 3: "Ditte, Child of Man" (1946, Bjarne Henning-Jensen; in Danish).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—"Go Girls!" Oct. 28 at 6: "They Call Me Muslim" (2006, Diana Ferrero) and "These Girls" (2006, Tahani Rached; in Arabic).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—"Recent Hong Kong Cinema." Oct. 24 at 1: "Election" (2005, Johnnie To; in Cantonese, Mandarin, and English). ♦ Oct. 24 at 3: "Triad Election" (2006, To; in Mandarin and Cantonese). ♦ Oct. 24 at 5: "Going Home" (2002, Peter Chan; in Cantonese). ♦ Oct. 24 at 6:30 and Oct. 25 at 3:30: "The Postmodern Life of My Aunt" (2006, Ann Hui; in Mandarin). ♦ Through Nov. 14: Croatian films. Except where noted, all films are in Serbo-Croatian. Oct. 26-27 at 6:30 and Oct. 29 at 1: "Two Players from the Bench" (†). The Oct. 26-27 screenings will be introduced by the director, Dejan Šorak. ♦ Oct. 26 at 9:15: "How the War Started on My Island" (1996, Vinko Brešan). ♦ Oct. 27 at 2: Short animated films. ♦ Oct. 27 at 4:15 and Oct. 28 at 4:45: "A Village Performance of Hamlet" (1973, Krsto Papić), introduced by the director. ♦ Oct. 27 at 9: "What Iva Recorded on October 21, 2003" (2005, Tomislav Radić). ♦ Oct. 28 at 3 and 7 and Oct. 29 at 3:15: "Armin" (2007, Ognjen Sviličić; in German, English, and Serbo-Croatian). The Oct. 28 screenings will be introduced by the


American Ballet Theatre
2007 FALL SEASON
October 23 – November 4

This Week's Highlights:
World Premiere by Benjamin Millepied
World Premiere by Jorma Elo, Chuck Close and Philip Glass
Tudor's meditation on youthful romance, *The Leaves Are Fading*
Company Premiere of Balanchine's virtuosic *Ballo della Regina*

Julie Kent and Marcelo Gomes in *The Leaves Are Fading*. Photo © Lois Greenfield 2007.

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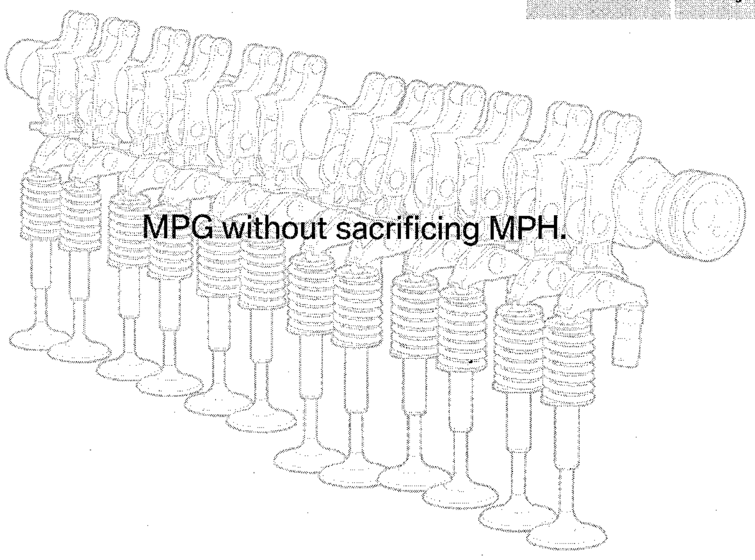
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director. ♦ Oct. 28 at 9: "The Melon Route" (2006, Branko Schmidt). ♦ Oct. 30 at 2 and 6:30: "Koncert" (1954, Branko Belan). ♦ Oct. 30 at 4 and 8:30: "Train Without a Timetable" (1959, Vejlko Bulajić).

READINGS AND TALKS

CORNELIA ST. CAFÉ
The filmmaker Alex Rose offers selections from his début story collection, "The Musical Illusionist and Other Tales." With music by the Formalist Quartet. (29 Cornelia St. Tickets at the door. Oct. 25 at 6.)

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Jeffrey Toobin, a staff writer for this magazine and the author of "The Nine: Inside the Secret World of the Supreme Court," joins Margot Adler, a correspondent for NPR, for a discussion about the current Court. (170 Central Park W., at 77th St. 212-868-4444. Oct. 25 at 6:30.)

CENTER FOR RELIGIOUS INQUIRY
Ingrid Mattson, a professor of Islamic studies at the Hartford Seminary and the president of the Islamic Society of North America, talks about the conflict between Sunnis and Shiites and its impact on the rest of the world. (St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Ave. at 51st St. For more information, call 212-378-0222. Oct. 29 at 6:30.)

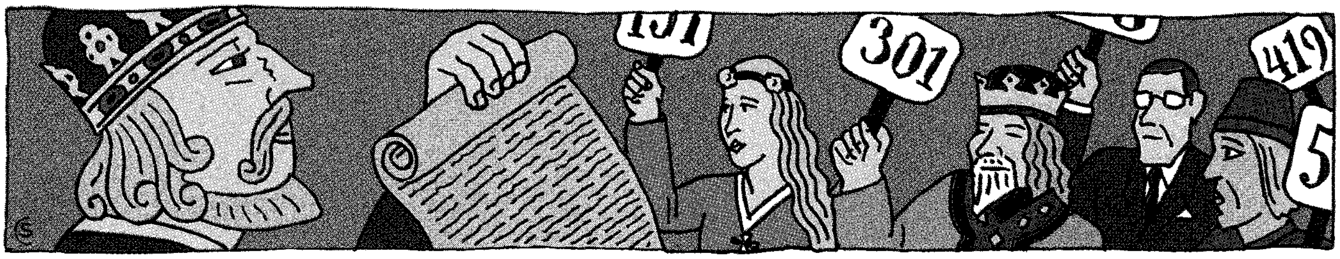
"NEW LITERATURE FROM EUROPE"
The annual series presents a night of writing on disreputable subjects and characters, with Alessandro Piperno, Stéphane Audeguy, Raul Zelig, Javier Calvo, and Jaroslav Rudis. The authors will read from and discuss their work, and English translation will be provided. Michael Moore, of the PEN American Center, is the moderator. (Instituto Cervantes, 211 E. 49th St. For reservations, call 212-308-7720. Oct. 30 at 6:30.)

POETRY SOCIETY OF AMERICA
The noted poetry publisher Wesleyan University Press celebrates its fiftieth anniversary with a reading by a number of its authors, including Peter Gizzi, Yusef Komunyakaa, Alice Notley, Harvey Shapiro, and Jean Valentine. (National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park S. Tickets at the door. Oct. 30 at 7.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"AN EVENING OF SPOOKY MODERN MUSIC"
Last fall, Tim Nye (who founded the hip downtown gallery Thread Waxing Space, in the nineties) and the curator David Brendel launched Paris Bar, a series of intimate evenings inside the Gothic confines of the National Arts Club, featuring performances by artists ranging from Rufus Wainwright to Laurie Anderson to the Young@Heart Chorus. The program on Oct. 30 is a pre-Halloween invocation of the ghosts of twentieth-century composers. The pianist Ethan Iverson—the former music director of the Mark Morris Dance Group and an integral part of the Bad Plus, the jazz trio known for bold interpretations of rock and pop songs—will perform pieces by Shostakovich, Schoenberg, Gershwin, Ives, and others. Alex Ross, the classical-music critic for this magazine, will read excerpts from his recent book, "The Rest Is Noise." The scene will be set by Dominique Nabokov's photographs of such cultural icons as Stravinsky, Copland, and her late husband, Nicolas, who composed his first ballet score for the Ballets Russes. (15 Gramercy Park S. For more information, visit www.nyehaus.com/parisbar, or call 212-995-1785.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
The grandeur of nineteenth-century academic art reigns supreme in a series of sales at **Christie's** this week, starting with an auction of European art works, including Orientalist paintings (Oct. 24). Here, mythological and Old Testament subjects (as in the gorgeous Symbolist "Expulsion from Paradise," by Franz von Stuck) share the stage with dreamy girls by Bouguereau and Hugues Merle and with landscapes, both familiar (like Corot's "Bords d'Étang aux Deux Vaches, Souvenir d'Italie") and exotic. Nineteenth-century porcelain is the focus of the Meissen sale the next morning, which includes more than three hundred pieces by the German manufacturer. The following day (Oct. 26) brings an auction of objects of silver and virtu. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ **Sotheby's** presents an assemblage of nineteenth-century furniture (Oct. 24), including an impressive Louis XVI-style mahogany grand piano by Bechstein (made in 1908-11), whose shell is decorated with gilt-bronze garlands and five Wedgwood plaques depicting classical figures. Furniture and decorative objects, both European and Oriental, from the famed Ariane Dandois gallery, in Paris—which is closing its doors—will be offered on the following two days (Oct. 25-26). (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ **Swann** offers a welcome change of pace at its annual magic-themed auction (Oct. 25), which features Part III of the collection of Christian Fechner, a French biographer of Houdini; among the seductive lots are Carl Willmann's "travelling lamp" (which magically moves from table to table) as well as various tools of the trade (secret boxes, collapsible birdcages, etc.). (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)



A copy of the Magna Carta goes up for auction at Sotheby's.

SEYMOUR CHWAST

ON THE HORIZON

THE THEATRE
QUEENS FOR A DAY
Nov. 6

A man seeking a flower of heaven for his bride gets caught up in the bustling city streets, in Charles Mee's "Queens Boulevard (the Musical)." The Signature Theatre Company production was inspired by a Kathakali dance drama. (212-244-7529.)

MOVIES
CATALAN SCAN
Nov. 7-11

The Catalan director Marc Recha has been cleverly negotiating narrative byways since his first feature, "Heaven Rises," made in 1991, about a man confined to bed and forbidden to have thoughts. In his most recent film, "August Days," Recha and his twin brother, David, star as themselves in a journey through their native countryside and its tangled history. BAM offers all five of Recha's features, and the director will be present. (718-636-4100.)

ART
SWATCH IT
Nov. 9-April 6, 2008

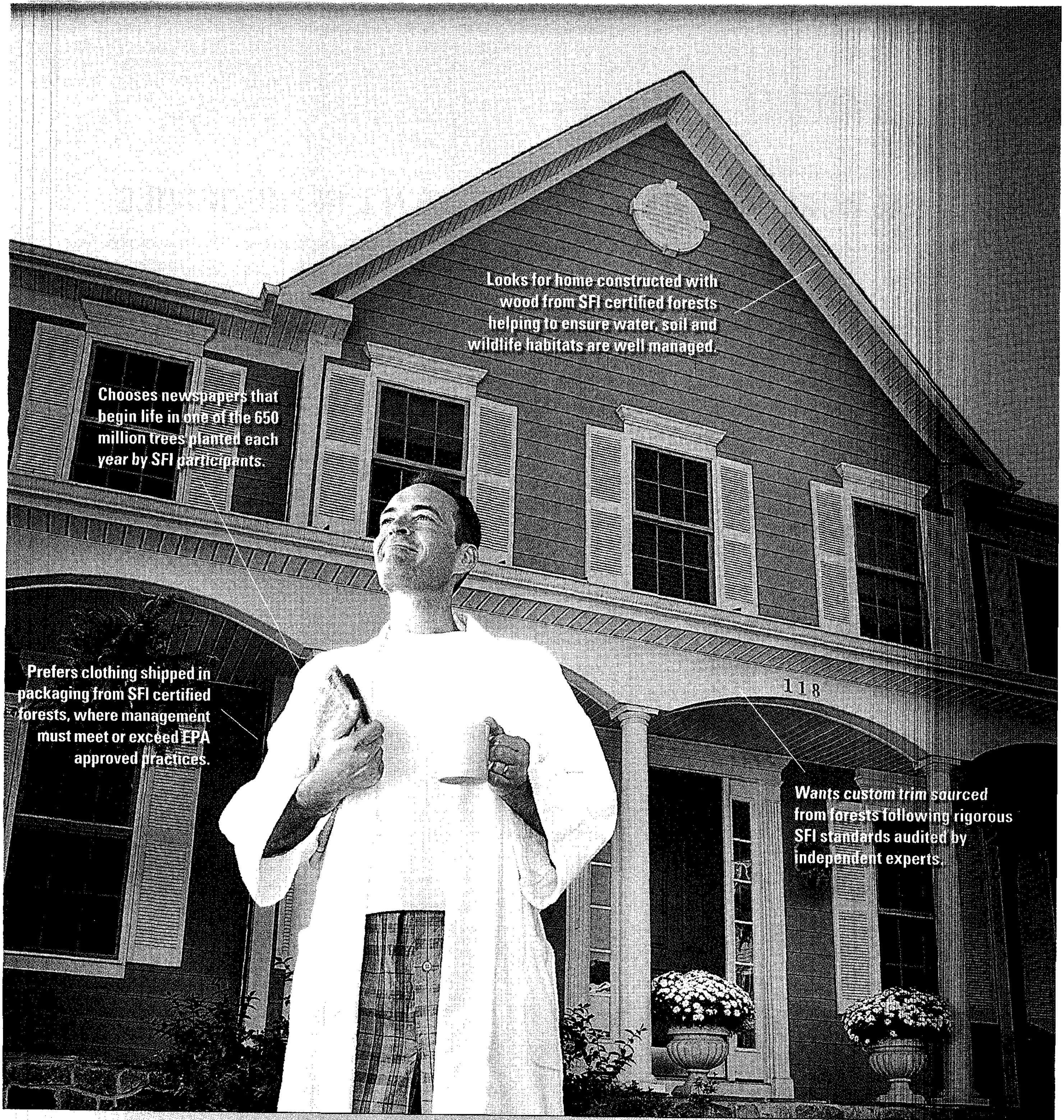
"Multiple Choice: From Sample to Product," at the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, considers the beauty of manufacturers' samples, from sixteenth-century lace patterns to a 1959 book of Le Corbusier wall coverings. (212-849-8300.)

NIGHT LIFE
NOT FADE AWAY
Nov. 17

The Rex Foundation, one of the legacies of the Grateful Dead, specializes in grass-roots giving. At the Highline Ballroom, the jam band Donna the Buffalo, the gospel-tinged ensemble Ollabelle, and others perform for the foundation's benefit. (212-414-5994.)

AUCTIONS
MAGNUM OPUS
Dec. 14

Before there was the Bill of Rights, there was the Magna Carta, the document in which King John, at the insistence of a group of English barons, agreed to the right of habeas corpus and maintained that no man was above the law. Sotheby's offers Ross Perot's copy, which dates from 1297 and is one of fewer than twenty copies of the document known to exist. (212-606-7000.)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THE CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON

A Major League Baseball Double Play

GREAT WORLD SERIES MOMENTS: IT'S ALL IN THE DETAILS

The greatest World Series championships are won on the details, remembered for those big, you-had-to-see-it-to-believe-it moments, a game-winning homer, a diving catch, an electrifying strike-out. But those moments are best savored in the finer details—a manager's moves, a runner's feints on the bases, an umpire's call, a home run—and every fall, history is made with a new series of can't-miss moments. Hitting it out of the park in the field of home entertainment, Sharp's AQUOS HD technology makes sure viewers never miss a detail, not a single fleeting moment of the game's biggest show. From when the blockbuster event begins, the AQUOS widescreen brings high-level play to life with its vivid state-of-the-art high-definition television. In the spirit of championship play across the fields, this is the first installment of a two-part series celebrating some of the greatest moments in the history of World Series baseball.

DENNIS ECKERSLEY—a future Hall-of-Famer—was baseball's best relief pitcher in 1988.

True fans of baseball know that winning the World Series is a season-long effort culminating in a flurry of October excellence. Holding high the championship trophy in the locker room is the big picture, but it wouldn't be possible without the hundreds of thousands of details that contributed, each in its way, to victory.

In the lead-up to the 2004 Red Sox/Cardinals Series, David Ortiz will always be remembered for his timely slugging in Boston's unprecedented playoff comeback against the Yankees. Boston's subsequent sweep of the Cardinals now seems an afterthought, but it was Ortiz, again, whose three-run homer in the first inning of the first game against St. Louis set the tone. Though another teammate went on to win the MVP honor for the Series, it was Ortiz' Game-One blast that signaled that Boston was not about to give up its shot at its first championship in eighty-six years. It's the kind of moment Sharp's HDTV delivers, first game to last, to enhance the true fan's appreciation of the game.

DAVID ORTIZ IN '04
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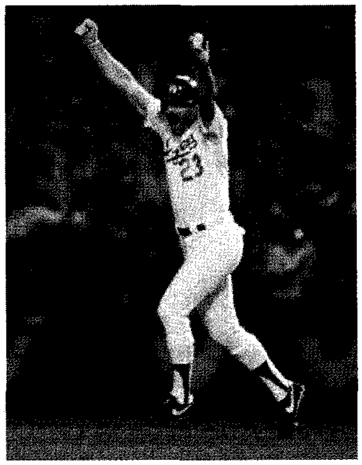
Any baseball fan can remember a game being won with one swing of the bat—the seventh game of the Pirates-Yankees 1960 Series, the pennant-clinching "Shot Heard 'Round the World" in 1951—but there's so much more to it.

Take Kirk Gibson's famous homer in the 1988 series. Hobbled by injuries to both legs, Gibby hit a pinch-hit walk-off two-run homer that won the first game for the L.A. Dodgers, propelling them to an upset of mighty Oakland, and earning Gibson the Series MVP award for his only at-bat.

He hit a full-count slider off of A's relief ace Dennis Eckersley in an at-bat that itself was epic. "Fastballs away," thought Eckersley to himself, assuming he could overmatch the gimp-legged slugger. Gibson fouled off three straight fastballs, looking worse each time.



KIRK GIBSON'S single-plate appearance is one of the game's most memorable.

Then against his better judgment, Eckersley tried a slider, hoping to catch an over-eager Gibson off balance. But Gibson didn't bite, and the pitch stayed just outside. "That was the key pitch," said Gibson after the game. "I was able to lay off it." Eckersley went back to the fastball. Gibson fouled one off, and then another sailed wide to even the count at 2-2. Another outside slider, and the count was full. With Gibson, no doubt, expecting a fastball, Eckersley, in a fateful move, went to the slider again. Gibson was all over it, pulling it into the seats in right field for one of the most dramatic home runs in World Series history.

"I don't *believe* what I just saw," said famed play-by-play radio announcer Jack Buck, as Gibson circled the bases. And neither did anyone else.

Greatness—always built on the details.

Watch the 2007 World Series on FOX TV beginning this Wednesday, October 24th.

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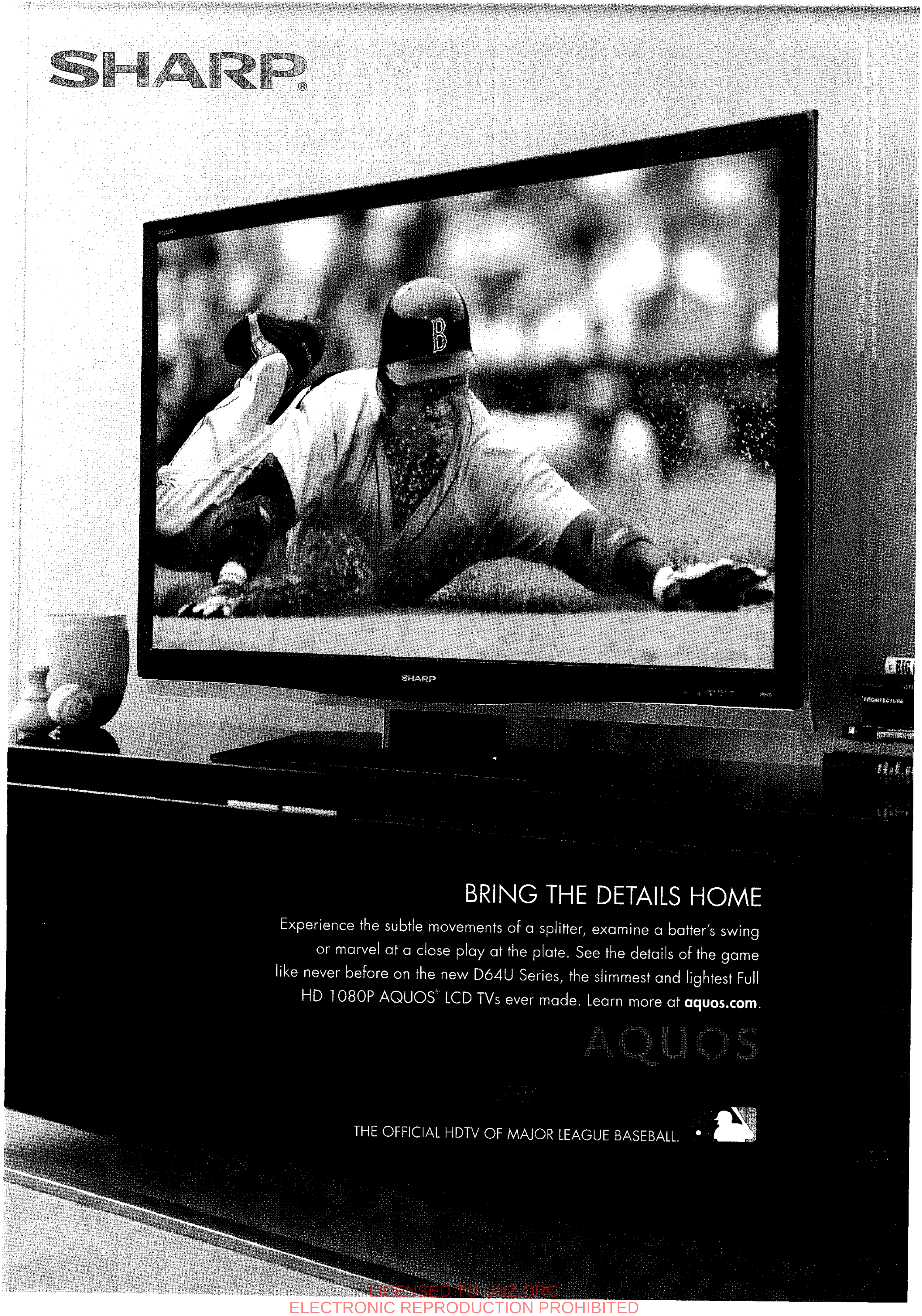

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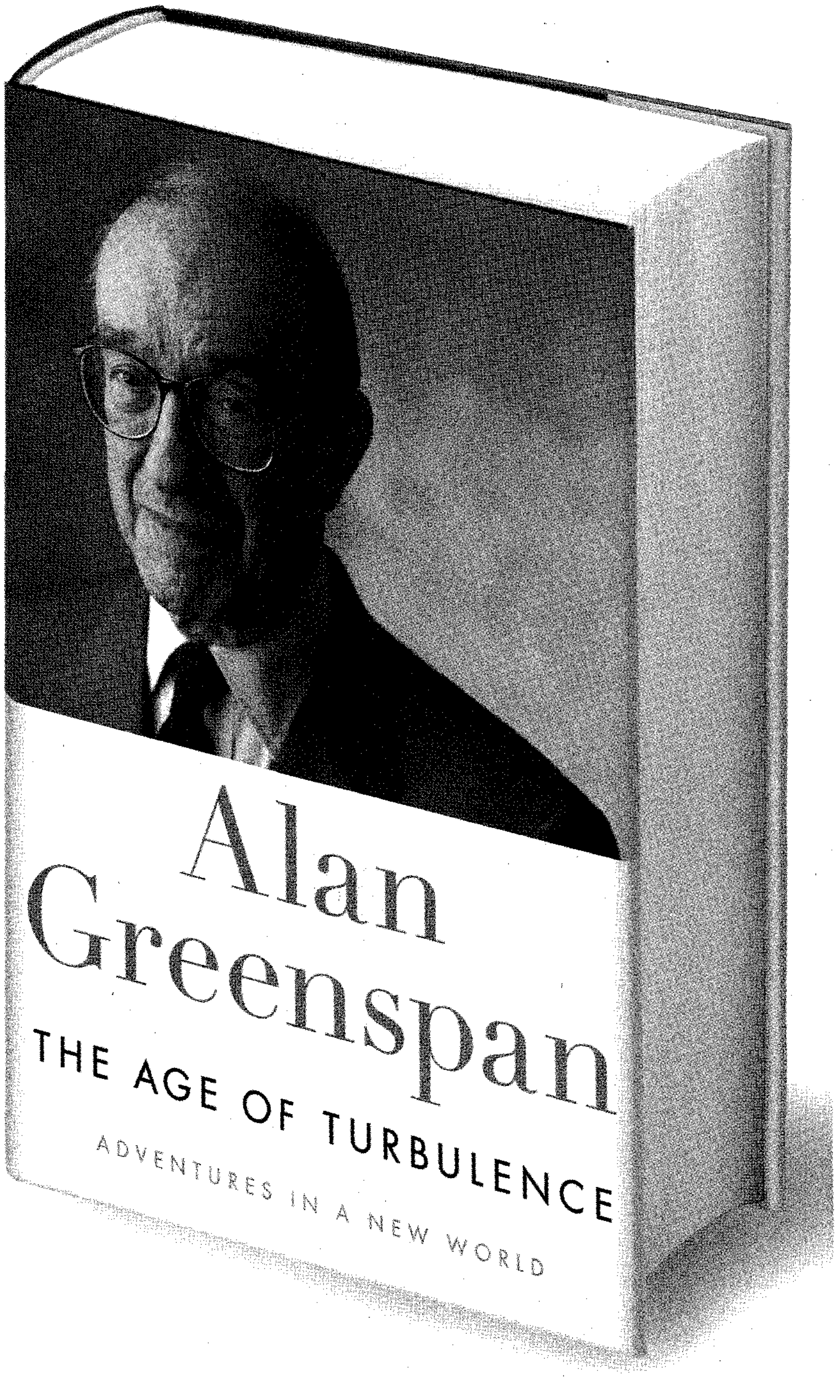

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THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
DYNASTIC VOYAGE

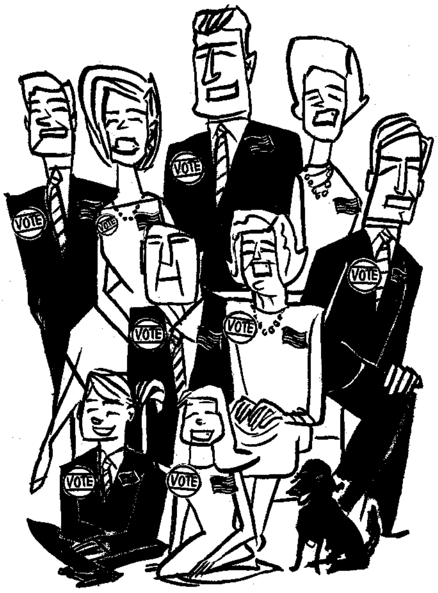
1ST COUSINS
2ND COUSINS

Shortly after Hillary Rodham Clinton declared her candidacy for President last winter, Roger Cohen, writing in the *International Herald Tribune*, declared that "a delicate problem confronts her that few people are talking about: almost two decades of dynastic domination of American politics." Well, they're talking about it now. "Forty per cent of Americans have never lived when there wasn't a Bush or a Clinton in the White House," a recent Associated Press story, by Nancy Benac, begins. "Talk of Bush-Clinton fatigue is increasingly cropping up in the national political debate," Benac goes on. "If Hillary Clinton were to be elected and reëlected, the nation could go twenty-eight years in a row with the same two families governing the country. Add the elder Bush's terms as Vice-President, and that would be thirty-six years straight with a Bush or Clinton in the White House." And a cover story in the *Economist* a couple of weeks ago, while noting that a woman President "would undoubtedly be a good thing for the country," adds, ominously, "But there is a downside: dynasty."

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

Ruling families are not supposed to be a big part of the picture in our democratic republic, whose very Constitution states firmly, "No Title of Nobility shall be granted by the United States." Even so, we've dabbled in dynasties from the beginning, when the Lee family, of Virginia, got to work spawning two signers of the Declaration of Independence, three governors, two senators, nine members of Congress, and four Confederate generals, including Robert E. (The Lees' Washington, Randolph, and Harrison in-laws won some elections, too.) The New Jersey Frelinghuysens are well into their third century of political droit du seigneur, from Frederick (born 1753), a delegate to the Continental Congress and later a United States senator, through Rodney (born 1946), a current member of the House of Representatives.

If anything, the dynastic dynamic has picked up speed in the past half century or so. It reached a perfect storm in 1962, when Massachusetts voters filled the Senate seat vacated by John F. Kennedy, grandson of Congressman and Mayor John F. Fitzgerald and son of Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy, when he was elected President—the very seat that, in 1952, J.F.K. had wrested from Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., who was a great-great-great-grandson of Senator George Cabot, a grandson of the Senate titan Henry Cabot Lodge, and a son of George Cabot Lodge, who, though himself a poet, married a Frelinghuysen. (Are you following this?) The 1962 Democratic nominee for senator was, of course, Edward Moore Kennedy, then thirty years old. His Republican opponent was—wait for it—another George Cabot Lodge, this one a son of Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., and a great-great-great-great-grandson of, etc. Nor was that all. There was a third-party "peace" candidate, too, a professor of European history at Harvard: H. Stuart Hughes, grandson of Charles Evans Hughes, Governor of New York, Chief Justice of the United States, and 1916 Republican Presidential nominee. During a primary debate, Kennedy's opponent for the Democratic nomination told him that if his name were just Edward Moore his candidacy would be a joke. A real zinger, but it might have been even zingier if its deliverer, Eddie McCormack, had not been the nephew of John W. McCormack, Speaker of the United States House of Representatives.



Teddy won. But even if one of the others had prevailed the result would have illustrated the point, which is that a country with such a plenitude of political patriarchies—not only Kennedys, Lodges, Hugheses, and McCormacks but also Bayhs, Browns, Cuomos, Daleys, Dodds, Longs, La Follettes, Romneys, Tafts, and Udalls (to say nothing of Bushes and Clintons)—cannot claim immunity from the apparently universal temptation to tug the forelock. On Capitol Hill, at the moment, there are five senators whose dads were senators before them; in the House, the legacy cases begin, but do not end, with the Speaker, Nancy Pelosi, whose father was a congressman (and mayor of Baltimore).

At the Presidential level, the Bushes 41 and 43 were preceded by the Adamses 2 and 6, the Harrisons 9 and 23, and, of course, the Roosevelts 26 and 32. The younger members of the first three pairs on this list—sons in the first two cases, a grandson in the third—all had the dubious distinction of winning the Presidency while being defeated at the polls, which suggests a certain thinning of the blood. The Roosevelts were more distantly related; Theodore was Franklin's fifth cousin, as (once removed) was his wife, Eleanor—a spiritual and political auntie of Hillary Clinton. Which brings us to the women, who, in this country and elsewhere, have generally come to power as a result of family ties.

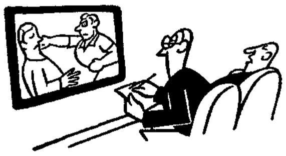
In most cases, the tie has been broken by death. In South Asia, which seems to lead the world in female national leaders, violent death is invariably a factor. In Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, a total of four female heads of state have come to power in the wake of male relatives' assassination; in India, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru's daughter, was herself assassinated, as was her son and successor, Rajiv. (Her daughter-in-law, Sonia, now heads the ruling Congress Party.) Burma's imprisoned opposition leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, is the daughter of the assassinated independence leader Aung San. And the father of Benazir Bhutto, Pakistan's two-time and perhaps future Prime Minister, was a Prime Minister whose life ended at the gallows; her return to Karachi last week was marked by a suicide-bomber attack that claimed more than a hundred lives.

In the United States, the widow-of and daughter-of pattern has been gentler. Of the two hundred and forty-four women who have served in the House and the Senate, forty-six succeeded their husbands and twelve their fathers. The wife-of, as distinct from widow-of, method of conferring power has been a relatively minor theme, found mostly in the nether parts of the country—one thinks of Governors Ma Ferguson, of Texas, and, especially, Lurleen Wallace, of Alabama, through whom George ruled when term limits forced him out of the state house.

Senator Clinton is different, obviously. She is indisputably a wife-of, but it was she, not he, whom *Life* selected as an icon of their generation when she graduated from college. It was she, not he, who, as a young lawyer, got the coveted job with the House Watergate investigation. She would have gone far, maybe even this far, without him. However much she benefits from the dynasty factor, though, the *Economist* is right: there's a downside. The downside's name is Bush. If, as the voters in 2000 wished, Al Gore, son of Senator Albert Gore, Sr., had been granted the White House, things might be a bit easier—not just for Hillary Clinton but also for her main Democratic rival, Senator Barack Obama. George W. Bush has been as poor an advertisement for "inexperience" as for dynasticism. It's not fair, of course. Bush's failure to learn much of anything for the past six years suggests a deficit of character, not of experience; his unwillingness to employ his father's skills and advice on behalf of the nation shows a disrespectful disregard for a dynast's biggest advantage. He has given both freshness and family a bad name.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

THE BEST MEDICINE
WE ARE ALL LARRY DAVID

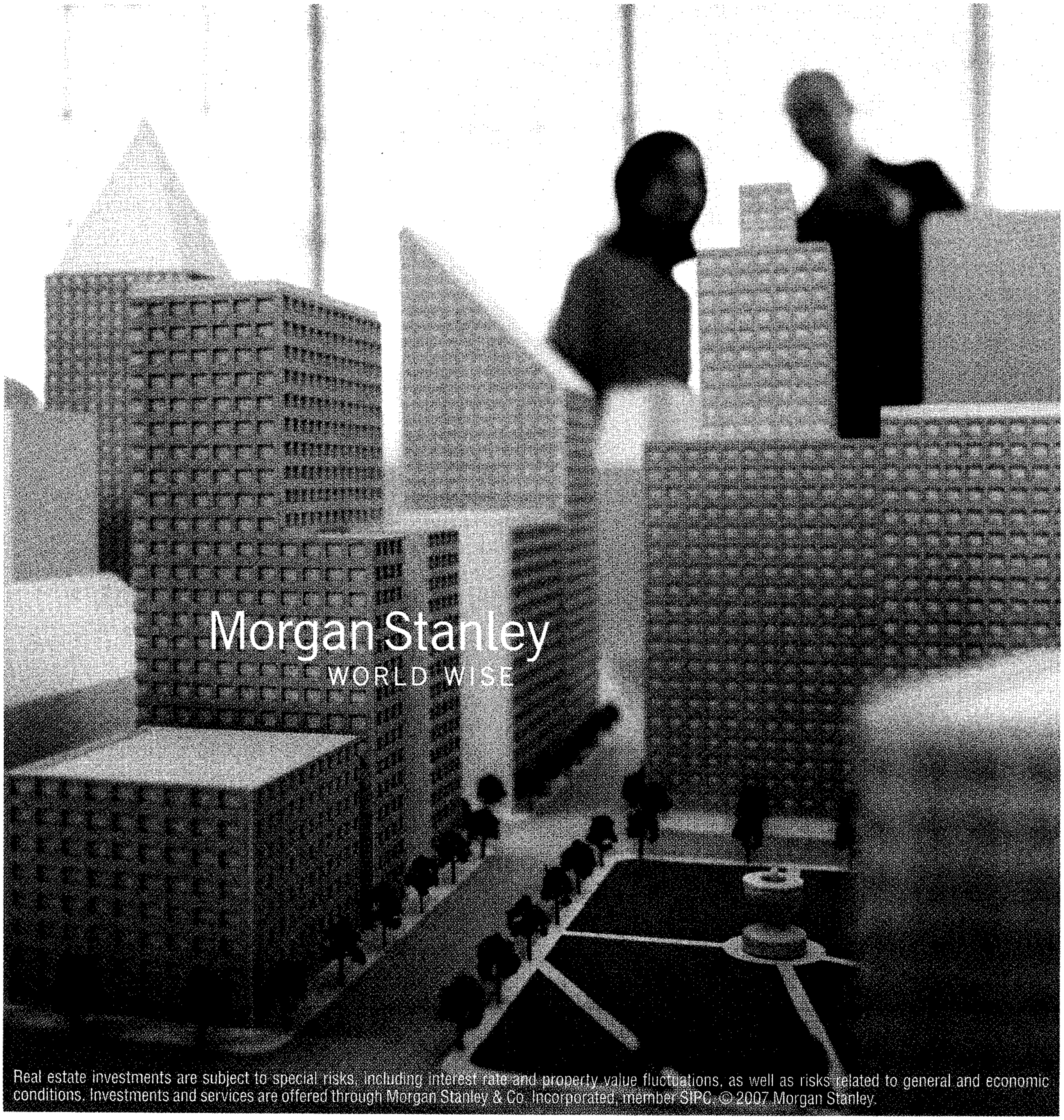


In 2004, David Roberts, a second-year clinical-psychology student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, had a summer job teaching social skills to a group of schizophrenic patients at a state hospital. He had a particularly unresponsive group ("Many patients are flattened by their meds," he explained recently) and tried in vain to interest them in role-playing everyday social situations, offering the patients rewards of points and tokens in return for not giving in to their urges to wander around, respond to phantom voices, or otherwise become disruptive—a traditional system of behavioral therapy.

During a break one day, Roberts, watching television in the hospital's lounge, noticed that a change had come over his patients, who generally seemed immune to basic social signals. "They were laughing at the ironic commercials," he said. "They were laughing at 'Friends.' They were laughing at all the places I was laughing." Many showed a fluency in the kinds of social communication that Roberts had been struggling to teach them in therapy. "We watched a scene from 'Monk' where Tony Shalhoub won't shake hands with anyone for fear of germs, and walks away awkwardly. I asked a man who'd been an inpatient for ten years, and who was generally blank, what had happened, and he shook his head and gave me a wry grin. Unspoken communication is huge for someone like that."

So Roberts began showing TV clips during therapy sessions. Soon he had narrowed his selections down to one show: television's purest expression of social dysfunction, "Curb Your Enthusiasm." Roberts considers Larry David to be the perfect proxy for a schizophrenic person. "On his way into his dentist's office, he holds the door open for a woman, and, as a result, she's seen first," he said. "He stews, he fumes, he explodes. He's breaking the social rules that folks with schizophrenia often break." He went on, "Or the one where Ted Danson and Mary Steenburgen invite Larry and his wife to a concert: the night arrives, they don't call, Larry assumes they don't like him, then it turns out he got the date wrong. It's a classic example of a major social cognitive error—jumping to conclusions—that schizophrenic patients are prone to." As the patients watched David flub situation after situation, they laughed, and they willingly discussed with Roberts how they might behave in the same circumstances. "That bald man made a mountain out of a molehill!" one woman called out during a session.

Roberts and his U.N.C. adviser, David Penn, began to formalize these findings, mapping out a teachable technique called Social Cognition and Interaction Training. They tested SCIT in four preliminary studies, and in post-training evaluations patients showed significant improvement



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in deciphering social situations. The technique has attracted attention—practitioners in Germany, Portugal, and China are now watching TV with their patients—and this fall Penn and a third researcher are conducting a randomized control trial funded by the National Institute of Mental Health.

Larry David has been replaced, however. When no one at "Curb Your Enthusiasm" responded to a request for permission to use clips from the show, Roberts and Penn hired actors to film their own cringe-worthy situations. For instance, on a split screen, Suzanne calls her co-worker Heidi at home and invites her to dinner. "How did you get my number?" Heidi asks, and Suzanne, oblivious to Heidi's discomfort, explains that it's in the employee directory.

"Friday—I'm sorry, I already have plans," Heidi says. There's a long, horrible pause as Suzanne's face falls, and she begins backing off from the invitation—just as Heidi reconsiders and says that she has some time free on Saturday.

Larry David

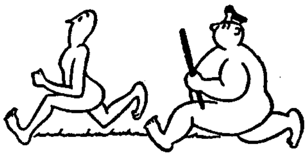
"No, I'm sorry," Suzanne says. "I didn't mean to *interrupt* you." Angry and embarrassed, she hangs up the phone. Roberts said that when his patients watched this bit they slapped their foreheads and winced. "They were, like, 'Oh, man, I do that all the time!' "

Larry David, reached on the telephone in California, said that he hadn't realized how deeply the awkwardness on his show would affect people. "It just deals with how you're supposed to behave," he said. "A lot of the time, it's just me expressing myself freely. I knew that my own mental health was problematic, but should I be worried? I mean, I blow up, too! Is this something undiagnosed? Do I need to see a clinical psychologist?"

—*Jacob Ward*

LOCKED UP

UNDERWEAR DIPLOMACY



The civil-rights lawyer Clive Stafford Smith is fond of citing the ironies of the justice system as administered by the Joint Task Force at Guantánamo Bay: cellblocks, for Muslim prisoners, named Romeo and Whiskey; mandatory reporting of traffic accidents involving iguanas on the premises; the ferry from the civilian portion of the island to the prisoners' zone playing Jimmy Buffett's "Margaritaville" on a continuous loop. Stafford Smith represents thirty-five inmates at Guantánamo and has made nineteen trips there in the past three years, but perhaps the most bizarre of his experiences occurred in August, when, as the Washington *Post* reported, he received a letter from the United States Navy suggesting that he and another attorney had smuggled a pair of Under Armour compression-fit underpants (providing, according to the company's Web site, superior "moisture management") and a Speedo bathing suit to one of their clients. Stafford Smith's response to the Navy struck a note of incredulity. "As you know, anything we take in is searched and there is a camera in the room," he wrote in a letter. "Does someone seriously suggest that Mr. Katznelson or I have been stripping off to deliver underpants to our clients?"

On a recent afternoon, over drinks, it was suggested to Stafford Smith that such an antic approach (he had also wondered, in the letter, whether Guantánamo officials thought that his client wanted a Speedo "to paddle around in the only pool available to him, his privy") might belittle the gravity of his cause, which basically derives from the conviction that no human being should willingly do harm to another. (Stafford Smith, who was born in England, was awarded an Order of the British Empire in 2000 for two decades of work defending death-row inmates, mostly in Louisiana.) A rangy, quick-witted man with a quizzical air, he scoffed at the suggestion that serious times demand self-seriousness. "If you take everything that the government does in earnest," he said, "you'll slit your wrists. When you're dealing with an absurd system, you've got to point out the absurdities."

As if Speedogate, as some bloggers took to calling the incident, weren't bizarre enough, on September 10th Stafford Smith received an e-mail titled "Briefs for Briefs." It said, in part:

> Dear Clive,
>
> . . . I read the exchange of correspondence re: under armour and speedos. . . . Anyway here's an offer.
>
> 2000 pairs of scrunchable (more easily smuggled if necessary!!), cool and durable silk boxer shorts. not Underarmour but probably more practical.
>
> Very patriotic in either Red, White or Blue and small Med and Large !!!!

The proposition, it turned out, was from a man in Florida (he prefers to remain anonymous), a consultant on overseas engineering projects and a self-proclaimed "conscientious entrepreneur" who imports clothing as a sideline. On the batch of silk boxers in question, he had forgotten to ask the manufacturers to add a crucial button and was therefore left with two thousand pairs rendered more or less unsalable, he said over the telephone recently, by their "rather large flies."

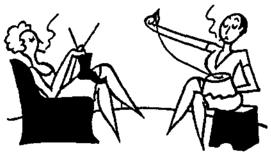
"It was a failed product," the lingerie entrepreneur explained. "It didn't move." He had read a story about Stafford Smith and the Speedo debacle on the U.N. Observer & International Report Web site, and was moved by the news that detainees at Guantánamo are frequently denied, among other things, a regular change of undergarments. "They get solitary confinement, they're psychologically damaged, and they're getting abused on the underwear front, *too*?" He went on to state the advantages of the boxers he was offering over the white boxer-brief-style underpants that, according to Stafford Smith, are standard issue at Guantánamo. "Silk is a great fabric for comfort—it's warm in the cold, and cool in the warm, and they're in sweaty conditions down there," the entrepreneur said.

Stafford Smith has denied providing his client with the Under Armour and Speedo contraband, which he believes were probably passed to the prisoner by a sympathetic guard. Under Armour gear is available for purchase at the Navy Exchange on the base, across the way from a gift shop offering souvenir T-shirts—as Stafford Smith notes in "Eight O'Clock Ferry to the Windward Side," a book about his experiences at Guantánamo, which was published in September—reading "Taliban Towers: A Five Star Resort," "Guantanamo Golf Course," and (for children) "Future Behavior Modification Instructor." The incident has, however, sparked an interest in what the entrepreneur deems "underwear satire." For now, the two thousand pairs of large-flied silk boxer shorts remain in a warehouse in Florida, but Stafford Smith has talked to the donor about commissioning a new shipment. These will be bright-orange boxer briefs with the words "Fair Trial, My Ass" printed on the backside.

—Lauren Collins

THE ARTISTIC LIFE

STITCHES IN TIME

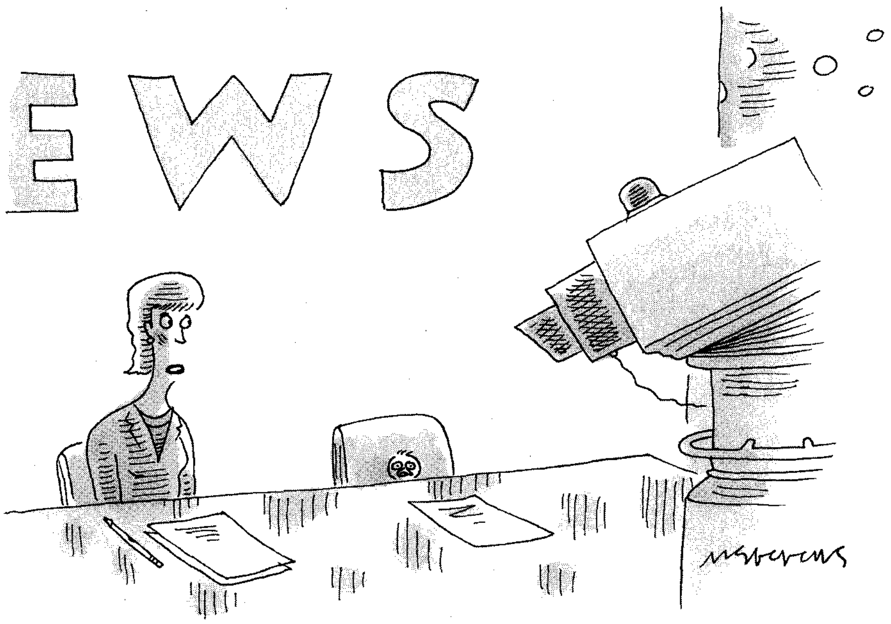


Five years ago, the Metropolitan Museum of Art mounted an exhibition of tapestries from the Renaissance that turned into a spring blockbuster. Its sequel, "Tapestry in the Baroque: Threads of Splendor," opened last week. Most New Yorkers have, at some stage (usually around tenth grade), been schlepped up to the Cloisters to see the Unicorn tapestries, and some remember from their "Hamlet" footnotes that when Polonius is stabbed through the arras Shakespeare is referring to a woven hanging from a town in France where great tapestries were made. But the appeal of the show, to both a mass audience and an esoteric one—the contemporary art world—came as a surprise to curators, and the editors of *Tate*, a journal published by the eponymous gallery, asked Elaine Reichek for her take on the phenomenon.

Reichek is a grandmother who does embroidery, but, whatever associations that image has for you, forget them. A conceptual artist with a degree from Yale and a punkish shock of platinum hair, she is a leading figure in the field of mixed-media art. The Museum of Modern Art gave her samplers a solo exhibition in 1999, and her latest show, "Pattern Recognition," opened last week at the Nicole Klagsbrun gallery. "I think that what makes tapestry so topical is its relation to computer art," Reichek said recently, over lunch at her studio, in Harlem. "They both involve patterning, and reducing or enlarging an image to a charted form. A stitch, in essence, is a pixel. With any pixellated surface, whether it's a tapestry or a digital photograph, the more pixels you have, the higher your image resolution."

One assumes, wrongly, that Reichek learned to embroider at someone's knee. "My mother played golf," she said. One also assumes that, for an artist of her generation (she is sixty-four), choosing embroidery was a feminist statement about women's work. "I was one of four women in my class at Yale, which had no women on the faculty," she said. "But what I do isn't about being a 'woman artist.' Men historically did most of the major woven and embroidered pieces. When I started out, in the sixties, we, my peers and I, hated everything that looked like art. Chuck Close purged brushes. Richard Serra was throwing lead. I was looking for a different medium to make marks with, and my early works were minimalist line drawings with thread. But then I got interested in samplers, and that became my endeavor." Reichek's samplers include embroidered reproductions of a Web page, Seurat's portrait of his mother sewing, an Attic frieze, quotations in needlework from Freud and Colette, Charlotte Brontë's favorite collar patterns with a paragraph from "Shirley," and an extract from Darwin's journals. Her needlework literally gives depth to the texts and images that she translates. "Unlike a pen or a brush," she said, "a stitch pierces the surface that it covers and belies its flatness, becoming part of the supporting structure."

Reichek "shops" for her images on the Internet, and plots them on a computer. Until now, her embroideries have been executed by hand, each one requiring months of labor, but for "Pattern Recognition" all except two of the pieces were created by her "latest toy," a digital sewing machine. She calls the show "an alternative art history in swatches," and the swatches—twelve-by-ten-inch rectangles with pinked edges—include miniature versions of paintings by Mondrian, Warhol, Philip Guston, Ed Ruscha, Magritte, Nancy Spero, and Damien Hirst. "Sampling, pastiche, appropriation—all those techniques that we think of as contemporary—have an ancient history," she explained. "Embroidery has been called 'the Hypertext of the Silk Route,' and as local patterns travelled by caravan around the world they were



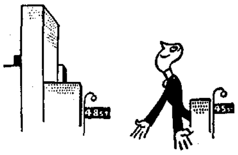
"And now here's our environmental correspondent with some alarming news about the sky."

'downloaded' by people who didn't know where they came from."

The Met's "Threads of Splendor" lives up to its name. At the preview, Reichek noted the affinities between the art world today and the Baroque court culture that produced the masterpieces on display: "Tapestries were the trophies of a gilded age with an overheated art market, and only the super-rich could afford them. A cycle like Rubens's 'Triumph of the Eucharist' took thousands of man hours to complete, with the weavers sitting cheek by jowl at a giant loom, each one, like an autoworker, responsible for a separate component of the product—feet or foliage or faces. This, too, is an era of megabuck commissions, and many of the gigantic pieces intended for art palaces are, in whole or in part, outsourced and produced industrially." She stopped in front of "The Battle of the Granicus," the scene of an epic confrontation between Alexander the Great and the Persian satraps. It was commissioned by Louis XIV, designed by Charles Le Brun, and woven in the workshop of Jean Jans the Younger, at the Gobelins factory, in Paris, between 1680 and 1687. The capes and banners of a great horde billow in the wind as trumpets blare, shields flash, flesh yields to spear, and, under a lowering sky, rendered in countless minute ivory and blue pixels, fabulously muscled warriors, human and equine, tangle in the surf. "Wow," Reichek said. "Now, there's a bio-pic."

—*Judith Thurman*

ROAD TRIP
RECREATIONAL VEHICLE



The sight of Herman Zapp driving his 1928 Graham-Paige automobile up to the New Jersey entrance to the Holland Tunnel one recent Monday afternoon was enough to bring the toll-booth attendant out of his automated fog.

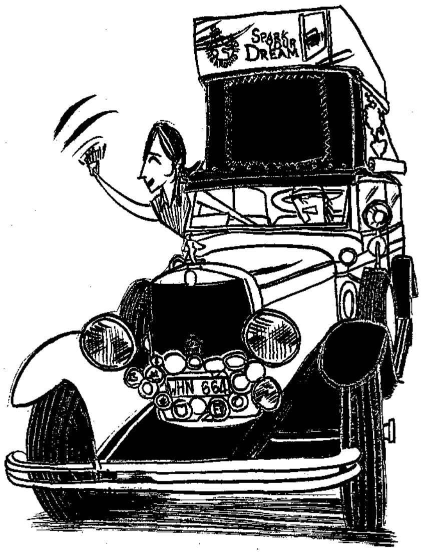
"You driving this?" he said as Herman forked over six dollars and goosed the engine to keep it from stalling. Candelaria, Herman's wife, sat in the passenger seat with their five-year-old son, Pampa, on her lap and aimed a digital video camera out the windshield. Their two-year-old, Tehue, sat in a car seat behind Herman, clutching a figurine of Ned Flanders from "The Simpsons," which had been procured at a Burger King in Jersey City.

"The Holland Tunnel, Pampa! The *biiiiig* city!" Herman yelled as the car rumbled forward through its three gears. "Under the water, Tehue! Hands up, everybody!"

In many ways, a 1928 Graham-Paige, which looks a little like Bonnie and Clyde's 1934 Ford, is well suited to driving in New York City: it has no turn signals—only a reflective red triangle and blinking lights on the back, like an Amish buggy—and its top speed is around forty miles per hour. Merging is a dicey affair, involving much head protrusion and frantic arm-waving, but the sheer spectacle tends to charm other drivers into compliance. The old Graham, which features original wooden-spoked wheels and atrocious gas mileage, is not an obvious vehicle for intercontinental road-tripping, but that is precisely what the Zapps use it for. The couple, who live in Argentina, bought the car in Buenos Aires in September, 1999, and decided to drive it up the hemisphere to Alaska, thinking that the trip would take about six months. It took three and a half years. They relied heavily on the largesse of their fellow Pan-Americans, who fed them, sheltered them, and occasionally repaired their car. (Herman is no mechanic, it turns out.) Cande got pregnant in Guatemala and gave birth to Pampa in Greensboro, North Carolina, and by the time they reached the Last Frontier State, on August 25, 2003, he was fourteen months old.

Because Pampa was an infant when they came through Manhattan on that first drive, the sights at the other end of the tunnel were new to him. "Look, Pampa," Herman said, puttering through the traffic on Canal Street. "In this city, you can find anything. Whatever you want to eat, you can find it. There's so many things here. People from Asia, people from Africa, people from Europe. There are people with tattoos, people with long hair."

The Zapps returned to Argentina in 2003 (the car went by boat, the family by plane), and, after Tehue was born, in 2005, resolved to make the car roomier for the next voyage. A mechanic friend added two feet of length to the middle of the chassis and supplemented the original body with fibreglass panels. The Zapps installed a nylon pop-top tent, printed on the inside with cartoon characters and photographs, so the boys could sleep on the roof, and strapped a wooden trunk to the back. The custom Graham is now both an antique camper and a bookmobile for a memoir, "Spark Your Dream," that the Zapps have written. Taped to the window is a sign—"You can be part of this dream: Book $19"—and there are two copies, one in English and one in Spanish, on the dashboard, in case they're able to make a quick sale at a red light.



A 1928 Graham-Paige

This time, the traffic moved on too quickly. "Look, Pampa, the buildings—old ones, new ones," Herman said. "And look at the McDonald's, what it says underneath. In Chinese, it is! And you know what people do a lot here? They honk their horns." He honked. "A lot. You have to be brave. And you have to scream, 'Hey, you!' "

Cande kept her arm around Pampa as he leaned forward to look at the bridges over the East River. "This is one of the most important cities in the world, Pampa," she said. "You'll see."

Over the next few months, the Zapps will make their way slowly to the West Coast, where they will try to hitch a ride to China. They plan to drive around Asia for the next three years. Cande, who is pregnant again, has started homeschooling (car schooling?) Pampa, but Herman wants to make sure they're back in Argentina by the time the boy is eight, he says, so that he can have a normal childhood.

—*Matt Dellinger*

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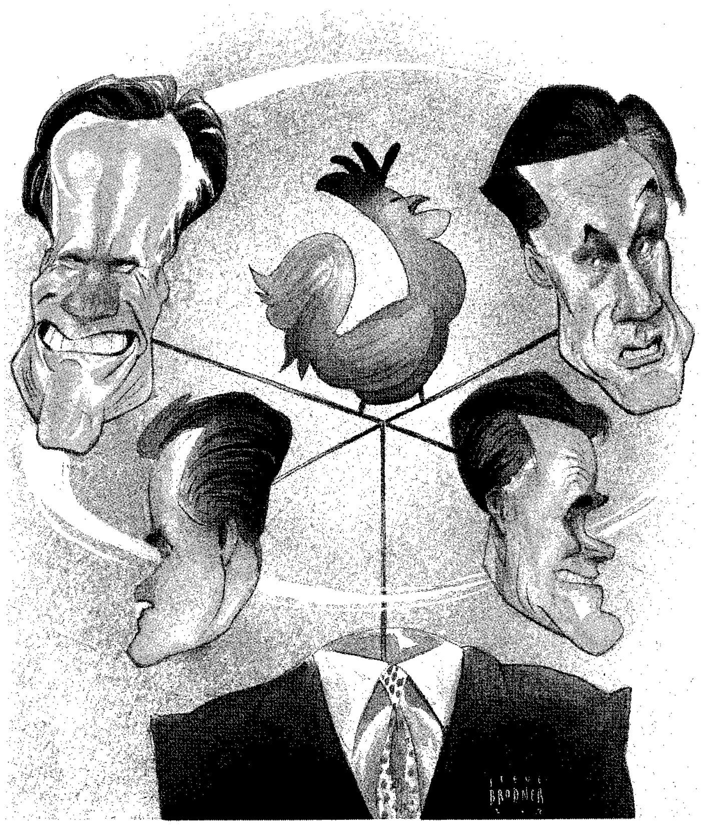
THE POLITICAL SCENE

THE MISSION

Mitt Romney's strategies for success.

BY RYAN LIZZA

On a recent Thursday in Derry, New Hampshire, Mitt Romney, the Republican Presidential candidate, was engaged in a conversation about milkshakes. It was early afternoon at a nineteen-fifties-themed diner called MaryAnn's, and Romney, surrounded by cameramen and reporters, went from table to table introducing himself to voters. Before running for office in Massachusetts—unsuccessfully for the U.S. Senate in 1994 and, successfully, for governor in 2002—Romney made a fortune as a management consultant and leveraged-buyout specialist, and, in twenty-five years in the business world, he learned to love information-gathering. "There are answers in numbers—gold in numbers," he wrote in "Turnaround: Crisis, Leadership, and the Olympic Games," his 2004 memoir. "Pile the budgets on my desk and let me wallow." His campaign manager, Beth Myers, told me recently that Romney regularly checks Mittromney.com, and sends off e-mails to aides, asking them to add more detailed information to the site.



Romney is a passionate advocate of each new stance he takes.

At MaryAnn's, Romney, his suit jacket removed and his sleeves rolled up, made his way swiftly through the restaurant, methodically quizzing the patrons. He sat down with two gray-haired women in a booth and pointed to a creamy drink on the table. "Is this a malt or is this a milkshake?" he asked.

"It's a frappe," one of the women replied.

"We call that a milkshake in the Midwest," Romney, who has lived in Massachusetts for the past thirty-six years, said. "It's a frappe here, right? This is ice cream and, and—"

"And milk," the woman replied.

"And milk, yeah. How are you doing? I'm Mitt Romney."

Romney is smart. He was chosen as the speaker for his graduating class at Brigham Young University. He pursued joint graduate degrees at Harvard, in law and business, graduating cum laude in law and in the top five per cent of his class at the business school. "I like smart people," he wrote in "Turnaround." "A lot." But, like many smart overachievers, especially in politics, he sometimes tries a little too hard. The conversation turned from frappes to health care, and he asked, "Is it O.K. here in New Hampshire?"

"I live in Vermont," one of the women responded.

"I live in Massachusetts," the other said.

Undaunted, Romney cheerily pressed for their views on how to improve the health-care system. One of the women made a pitch for more government spending on care for the elderly. The poor, she argued, benefit from government programs, and the rich can afford their own care. "I think the middle people need some help." Romney perked up and patiently explained the details of a 2004 law that provided more state assistance for home care. His new friends were smitten. "That's a nice idea," one of them said. Romney did not mention that the new rules applied only to the poor.

Romney walked into a room decorated with posters of fifties icons. He stood before Frank Sinatra and Marilyn Monroe and chatted with a table of patrons finishing plates of home fries and eggs. Suddenly, a heavyset man wearing a bright-orange cap entered the room. "Mr. Romney," he called out. "Eric Orff—I'm a hunter." It was a potentially awkward moment. Earlier this year, Romney claimed that he'd "been a hunter pretty much all my life." A few days later, he said in a statement, "I've hunted small game numerous times." Four days after that, Romney told W. Gardner Selby, of the Austin *American-Statesman*, "Any description of my being a hunter is an overstatement of capability."

Still, he couldn't resist. "You're a hunter?" he said to Orff. "Well, same here. Good to see ya." Orff had a question about the environment: "It's eighty degrees today. What are we going to do about global warming?" Romney's response was quick and concise. "We're going to get ourselves off of foreign oil," he said. "And to do that it's going to take nuclear power, clean coal, more efficient vehicles, and then we're going to dramatically reduce our greenhouse gases." It was a good answer, but also a strange one. Not long ago, Romney released a glossy pamphlet detailing

STEVE BRODNER

his positions on major issues. He sounded like Al Gore when talking to the environmentalist in New Hampshire, though his policy book's treatment of global warming reads more like something from ExxonMobil. In it, Romney refers to the "debate" over "how much human activity impacts the environment"—code words for the global-warming-denial crowd. He offers no plan to "dramatically" curtail emissions of CO_2, just an aside that "we may well be able to rein in our greenhouse-gas emissions." As the governor of Massachusetts, Romney, in December, 2005, pulled out of a Northeast-state agreement on carbon reduction—a plan that he had supported the month before.

This is a habit of Romney's. Politicians tend to pander, especially during the primary season. Romney's chief opponent, Rudy Giuliani, also has a history as a pro-gun-control, pro-gay-rights Republican. But while Giuliani simply downplays his record on those issues, Romney sells himself as a true convert. He not only shifts positions; he often claims to be the most passionate advocate of his new stances. It's one of the reasons that his metamorphosis from liberal Republican to committed right-winger seems so jarring. In 1994, in his race for the Senate, he didn't simply argue that he was a defender of gay rights; he claimed to be a stronger advocate than his opponent, Edward Kennedy. Today, he's not just a faithful conservative but the *only* Republican candidate who represents "the Republican wing of the Republican Party." He brings a salesman's bravado and certainty to issues. At a debate in May, when asked how he would respond to a hypothetical situation involving the interrogation of a terrorist at Guantánamo Bay, he said, "Some people have said we ought to close Guantánamo. My view is that we ought to double Guantánamo." Elected as a pro-choice governor in 2002—YouTube is flooded with his passionate advocacy of abortion rights—he now presents himself as the most resolute anti-abortion candidate in the Republican field. A Mormon, he sometimes adopts the religious language of Evangelicals when he is addressing conservative Christian groups. To economic conservatives, he pitches himself as the candidate most strongly committed to slashing spending and taxes. (He's the only major G.O.P. candidate to have signed a formal anti-tax pledge, the sort of move that his spokesman dismissed as "government by gimmickry" in Romney's 2002 gubernatorial campaign.) To national-security conservatives, he is the most hawkish. (He says often that President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, of Iran, should be indicted under the Genocide Convention, and his campaign has named the former C.I.A. counterterrorism chief, Cofer Black, the vice-chairman of Blackwater, as an adviser.) But, while giving customers exactly what they want may be normal in the corporate world, it can be costly in politics.

Romney's transition from the boardroom to the campaign trail has been clumsy in other respects, too. According to "Turnaround," at Bain Capital, the investment firm that Romney headed, the partners suspected that their boss fostered a cutthroat competitive environment in order to motivate them. When he greets voters, this competitiveness often surfaces as posturing; chitchat turns into one-upmanship. After a voter at the New Hampshire diner told Romney, "My daughter goes to Michigan State," he replied, "Oh, does she, really? My brother's on the *board* of Michigan State." When another patron said that she was from Illinois, Romney told her, "I won the straw poll at the Illinois Republican convention!" Romney's most seemingly innocuous comments can be head-scratchers. Later that afternoon, standing next to a local supporter who had escorted him to several Derry businesses, Romney told reporters, "Now I understand why I'm going to be gaining a couple of pounds with him, because we've eaten everywhere we've gone, almost." Romney, a fitness buff who is shown jogging in a recent campaign ad, had about half a frappe at the diner (he threw the rest away) and a cookie at a bakery—nothing at an Italian restaurant, a feed store, a scrapbook shop, or a hardware store. Whatever gene causes hyper-competitive perfectionists always to go one step beyond their adversaries, or anyone else, Romney has it. Republican candidates inevitably criticize, with some accuracy, Democratic proposals on health care or taxes as being closer to the way things are done in Europe. Earlier

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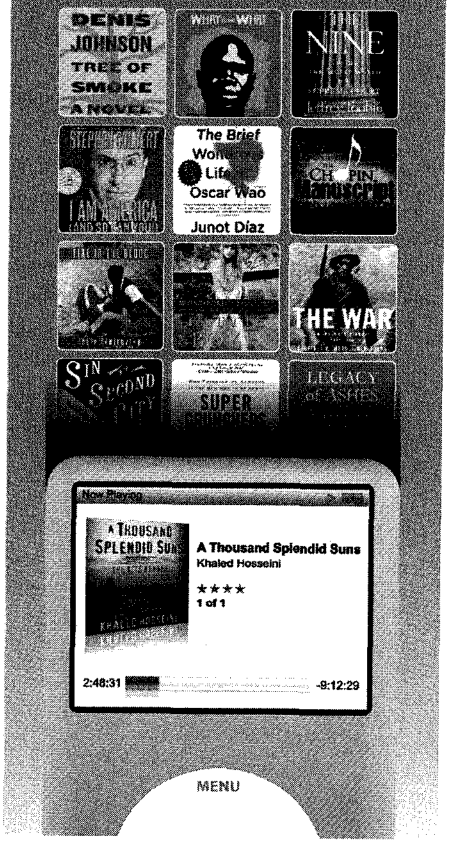

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in the day, before a crowd of New Hampshire college students, Romney said that the policies of Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, and John Edwards were similar to those of a Communist dictatorship. Their ideas, he said pointedly, "didn't work for the Soviet Union."

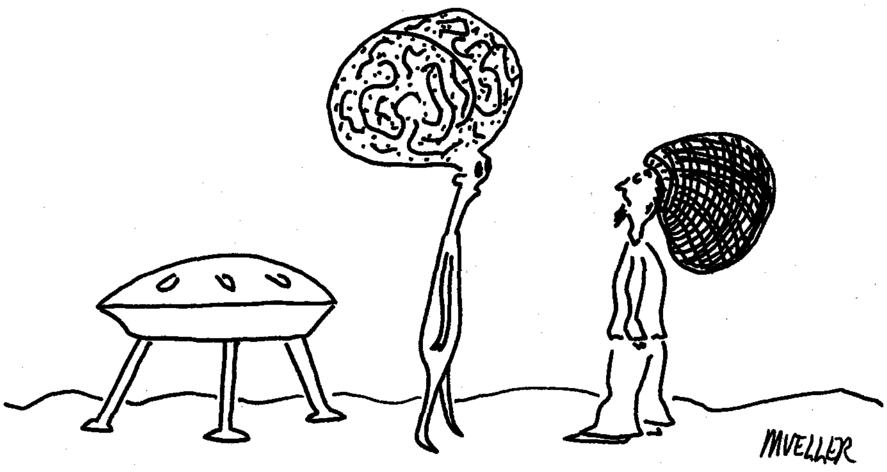
Most explorers searching for the philosophical roots of Mitt Romney begin the journey with his religion. Mormonism is a major factor in the campaign, even if it is rarely mentioned by Romney's opponents. "I think the Mormon issue is a real problem in the South, and it's a real problem in other parts of the country, but people are not going to say it," Dan Bartlett, President Bush's former counsellor, said in a recent speech. "People are not going to step out and say, 'I have a problem with Romney because he's Mormon.' What they're going to say is he is a flip-flopper." Given the importance to the Republican Party of Evangelical Christians—especially Southern Baptists, who have traditionally been hostile to Mormonism—the Romney campaign is understandably concerned about the attention that reporters pay to his religion. Romney's senior aides were unsettled by a recent *Newsweek* cover story that dwelled on Romney's relationship to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, as the Mormon Church is officially known. "I thought it was unfortunate that every aspect of the Governor's life was presented through the prism of religion," Kevin Madden, Romney's press secretary, told me. Romney himself, irked by *Newsweek's* argument that he was distancing himself from Mormonism, wrote to the magazine, saying, "I am an American running for president, not a Mormon running for president, but I am also very proud of my faith." He added, "It is puzzling that when *Newsweek* looks at me what you mostly see is a Mormon." Romney sometimes faces hostile questions about his religion. At a recent "Ask Mitt Anything" event in Orange, California, a young man asked, "If you were elected President, how many First Ladies could we expect?" The audience gasped, but Romney remained unflustered and advised the questioner to consult the L.D.S. Web site.

In private, a Romney aide frankly conceded that, aside from accusations of "flip-flopping," his greatest political liability is his religion, which is unfamiliar to most Americans. Jan Shipps, a leading non-Mormon scholar of Mormonism, said that it was useful to consider the difference between Romney and Harry Reid, the Senate Majority Leader, who holds the highest government post of any Mormon in American history. "Reid is a Church member," Shipps said. "But he is a convert. I'm sure he's devoted, I'm sure he's a tithe-paying member and all of that"—devout Mormons contribute ten per cent of their earnings to the Church—"but he was not born into the Church. He didn't get Mormonism with his mother's milk, as it were. But Romney is a sixth-generation Mormon"—what scholars call a DNA Mormon. "His ancestors were some of the very first converts."

Romney's ancestors had important roles at every turning point in the Mormons' dramatic nineteenth-century history. Mormonism was founded in western New York, in 1830, by Joseph Smith, after he claimed to have been visited by an angel who directed him to gold plates with inscriptions, which he "translated" into the Book of Mormon. In the eighteen-forties, Romney's forefathers were present in Nauvoo, Illinois, a settlement established by Smith. After Smith's murder, in 1844, which forced many persecuted Mormons to move westward, it was Mitt Romney's great-great-grandfather who first explored the mountain pass leading down to the Salt Lake Valley, according to "Turnaround." When, in the eighteen-nineties, the federal government cracked down on polygamy, again scattering Mormon families, Romney's great-grandfather, who had five wives, was among those who fled to Mexico, where Romney's father, George, was born, in 1907.

By the time Romney was a teenager—he was born in 1947—the Church had shifted toward growth by conversion, a change that reinforced the uniqueness of the ancestral Mormons. In addition, George Romney, who grew up in Mormon strongholds in Idaho and Utah, brought up his family in Michigan, where he was the chairman and president of the American Motors Corporation, a small, aggressive competitor of the Big Three, and, later, a three-term governor of the state. Mitt Romney grew up in Bloomfield Hills, a Detroit suburb, where he was the only Mormon in his school. Dane McBride, now a Virginia physician, met Romney in 1966, while both were serving in France as missionaries. Afterward, Romney and McBride attended Brigham Young University together. Like Romney, McBride attended schools where he was one of very few Mormons. "Mitt and I, because of that, were much more experienced in explaining and defending our religion," McBride told me. "We also grew up feeling that there was a little bit of a difference between us and our friends."

Many commentators have suggested that Romney will need to make a speech akin to the one that John F. Kennedy gave in 1960 to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association, in which he promised to resign if there was ever a collision between his beliefs as a Catholic and the national interest. Jan Shipps is skeptical of the idea that Romney could do something similar. "Mormon-



"How much for the hat?"

ism was a cult, just as Christianity was a cult in the beginning," she told me. "But a cult, when it grows up, becomes a culture, and the people who are a part of it take on an ethnic identity, a peoplehood. Romney is not Mormon the way, say, Ted Kennedy is Catholic. Romney is Mormon the way Ted Kennedy is Irish. That's the difference. And, when it's that much a part of who you are, it's very hard to explain it to other people, because you can't figure out why they can't see it. He can't do a J.F.K., because when J.F.K. did his thing on the Catholics there were people who knew that they were afraid of Catholicism, but at least they knew what it was."

Romney's cultural Mormonism is in some ways more important to understanding him than his theological Mormonism. As governor, after all, Romney had a history of supporting positions that were at odds with the practices of the Church. He has opposed cigarette taxes and loosened restrictions on alcohol sales, even though the L.D.S. strongly discourages its members from smoking and drinking. He has also opposed some forms of stem-cell research, even though the Church has no quarrel with such experiments. (Senator Orrin Hatch, of Utah, also a Mormon, is a prominent proponent of the research.) Romney grew up in an era when the Mormon Church was growing rapidly, and this forced it to start thinking like a corporation. It became what has been called a "franchise religion," and its leadership in Salt Lake City instituted a process of "correlation," which standardized Church teachings and missions around the world. In 1974, the Church even had a team of management consultants help restructure some of its operations. Romney was chosen for a leadership position during his mission in France, and was a leader of local Mormons in Massachusetts. "Gifted men who are Latter-Day Saints start getting assignments as administrators when they go on their mission," Shipps said. "And those assignments continue—from being in charge of people on this mission to eventually being in charge of a ward, which is like a parish. They have to administer that, and then they have to administer what is essentially a diocese. They learn administration in particular ways." In that sense, Romney may have learned as much about management from Mormonism as he did about religion.

According to McBride, one of the most important reading assignments Romney had as a missionary was the 1937 best-seller "Think and Grow Rich," by Napoleon Hill. Hill, the Stephen Covey of his era, essentially invented the personal-success genre, and his advice about the importance of persistence and organized planning would have been particularly useful to an American Mormon trying to convert French Catholics. During a visit to Romney's mission, Howard W. Hunter, a member of the Church's Quorum of Twelve Apostles and later the president of the Church, advised Romney and his colleagues to study Hill's book. "I want you to understand, the Lord does not care whether you become rich or not, but he does want you to learn how to succeed, and to be successful," he told them. The can-do spirit of an achievement expert, like Hill, is highly compatible with Mormon religious teaching. There is no original sin and no predestination in Mormonism. It is a religion that preaches optimistic assumptions about human nature, including the premise that humans can become like God in the afterlife, which may help explain its increasing worldwide appeal. In a recent essay in the *Christian Century*, the religious historian Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp noted that, unlike earlier branches of Christianity, in Mormonism "healthy living and moral values are extolled not simply as exercises in discipline, but as keys to individual progress." She added, "The language that the L.D.S. Church uses to discuss child-rearing focuses less on preventing sin and avoiding temptation and more on personal cultivation." According to McBride, he and Romney became diligent students of "Think and Grow Rich." "We read it, we studied it, we discussed it together—we were into it," he told me. "It wasn't Romney's Bible through life or something like that, but those were concepts and ideas that we got early on, and they did have an impact on us and we did study it, and it became a part of our mentality."

In late September, Mitt Romney spoke before an audience in a banquet room in Santa Clara, California, within walking distance of high-tech firms like Yahoo, Nortel, and A.M.D. Wearing a blue suit and tie, a gold watch on his wrist, and product in his hair, he never moved from center stage, where an American flag helped frame him for his camera shots. He held a microphone with four fingertips and a thumb and rotated his torso a hundred and eighty degrees every five seconds or so, like a human garden sprinkler. This was his kind of crowd. The event was organized by the local chamber of commerce, and the questions were about entitlements, technology, education, and immigration. The man seated next to me was the president of the Silicon Valley chapter of Citizens Against Lawsuit Abuse. At this forum, no one asked Romney about abortion or religion.

One person wanted to know if there was any difference between Romney's background and that of his opponents. "Is there anything in my background that's *not* different than my opponents?" Romney answered. He went on to relate an anecdote from his days as a management consultant: "I spent my life in the private sector. I spent twenty-five years in business, some high-tech, some low-tech. I remember one of my first consulting assignments—someone came and said they'd taken a piece of glass, about eighteen inches long, and they'd stretched it to a kilometre long. And they'd shone a light through it. That was an optical wave gatherer, they called it. And now we call it fibre optic. And we were hired to find a strategy for Corning to take advantage of this technology." Romney is as keen to talk about his business background as he is reluctant to talk about his religious background. He has said that his experience as a young management consultant is what helped prepare him for government service.

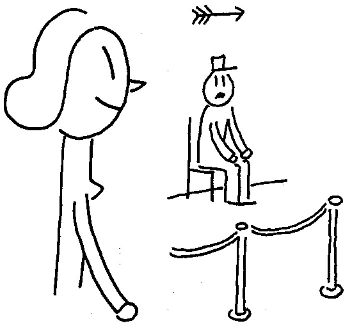
Romney would be both the first Mormon President and the first President to come from the world of consulting. The profession, whose roots are in the scientific-management fad of the nineteen-twenties, has only recently begun to produce its first generation of political leaders. Benjamin Netanyahu is an alumnus of the Boston Consulting Group, where Romney started out, and William Hague, the former Tory leader, got his first job at McKinsey & Company. In the United States, the growing reputation of consulting as the "it" profession for the American élite got a recent endorsement when Chelsea Clinton decided to join McKinsey rather than pursue a law degree, as her parents did.

Romney joined the Boston Consulting Group in 1975, after graduating from Harvard Business School. The firm had been founded by a former Bible salesman named Bruce Henderson, one of the industry's conceptual pioneers. In the insular world of consulting, B.C.G. had a reputation as the intellectual shop, seen not just as a hands-on consultancy but also as a think tank, and it popularized the concept of business strategy, or organizing a company around its goals—an idea that swept boardrooms in the seventies. "B.C.G.'s idea was: We don't need to understand your industry; we need to understand a few important principles that we can apply to all of our clients," Christopher McKenna, the author of "The World's Newest Profession," a history of the consulting industry, told me. B.C.G., using a toolbox of concepts that its people had come up with—"the experience curve," "the strategic business unit," and "the growth-share matrix"—helped reinvent the way its clients did business. Its big idea was the experience curve—over time, unit cost decreases as experience increases. Romney spent almost four years at B.C.G. applying these principles.

The year before Romney joined B.C.G., William Bain, one of the company's stars, had left to start his own firm, Bain & Company, which he promised would be a radical new consulting business. If B.C.G. was like an ivory tower, Bain was a trade school. The tradition best exemplified by McKinsey, one of the oldest firms, had consultants acting like pollinating bees, moving valuable information from one company to another, even within the same industry. Much of what you paid for as a C.E.O. was the expertise that McKinsey had lifted from your rivals. "It was a conduit for the transfer of knowledge," McKenna told me. "You paid McKinsey an entry fee to do this for you." Bain's idea was to create a more exclusive and mutually beneficial arrangement with his clients. He promised not to work for the competition, and, instead of simply devising a new strategy, he would stick around and help implement it. It was the difference between belonging to a gym and having a personal trainer.

Bain also demanded that his consultants work with top-level management, so that decisions could be executed quickly. The approach "was revolutionary," said Bob White, a Bain alumnus and a longtime Romney friend, who is now the chairman of the Romney campaign. In 1977, Romney joined the Bain team as part of a second wave of consultants who left the Boston Consulting Group. By 1978, *Fortune* had declared consulting "the current glamour industry for the newest M.B.A.s," and noted that Harvard graduates were moving into management consulting at a record pace.

Bain's brand of "relationship consulting" bred a unique culture at the company's headquarters, in Copley Square. Since Bain didn't work for business rivals, companies were more willing to share sensitive data. It was there that Romney developed his passion for collecting huge amounts of information. The company soon earned a reputation for extreme secrecy—it was dubbed the K.G.B. of management consulting. It's been reported that, initially, employees didn't use business cards, and they spoke in code when discussing clients in public. According to a study conducted by Stanford Graduate School of Business, Bain had a "strict policy forbidding interaction with the press." It adopted what was called a "one-firm" culture. Employees read "Dress for Success" and were sent on Outward Bound-style leadership retreats. Business reporters wondered why Bain consultants all seemed to wear the same red ties. Romney and his colleagues were called Bainies, and, not surprisingly, there were accounts of insufferable young Bainies swarming into a company and confidently reorganizing it as middle managers were brushed aside. As the consulting business grew, competition for the brightest M.B.A.s intensified, and Bain became an aggressive recruiter. Harvard once kicked the company off campus, temporarily, because the firm offered graduates "exploding bonuses," payments that declined each day the student dithered about a decision to join Bain.



William Bain believed that he could extract more value from the firms he advised by investing in them. In 1984, he chose Romney, by then one of his top consultants, to launch Bain Capital, a private equity firm that bought up companies, mostly through leveraged buyouts. Applying Bain's patented techniques, they sometimes expanded the companies they bought and at other times they downsized them, but they almost always made a profit. By the time Romney ran for the Senate, in 1994, it is estimated that he was worth several hundred million dollars.

Romney has said that his training as a management consultant taught him a methodology for problem-solving. He told the conservative author and talk-show host Hugh Hewitt that the conceptual tools he had picked up in the business world gave him the confidence to walk into a C.E.O.'s office and offer advice on an industry with which he was unfamiliar. "You're going to get data that they have but have never analyzed in the proper way, and then you're going to tear it apart and debate it amongst yourselves and with them and find new and bold answers," he told Hewitt. Ever since Romney moved into the political profession—starting with his failed Senate run—a great question has been whether this is a transferrable skill.

Romney's business background wasn't enough to beat Kennedy, who turned it into a liability by highlighting stories about companies that were downsized after Bain takeovers. Soon after that loss, Romney began looking for a public platform to showcase his talents. In 1999, he took over the Salt Lake Organizing Committee for the Olympic Winter Games of 2002, which was then mired in a bribery scandal. The tainted officials had been ousted, but a significant financial problem had emerged: there was a projected budget deficit of three hundred and eighty-seven million dollars. Romney cut costs, raised money, and successfully lobbied the federal government to allocate more funds for the Winter Olympics. By all accounts, he

MAN AND DERAILMENT

When the man took his son down the ravine
to view, along the opposite bank,
the pileup of a passenger train,
backhoes and cranes, things the child had seen
only in miniature, now huge, hauling
life-sized train cars out of the deep ravine,
inside his life-sized head the quiet boy
wondered how he would remember the scene
and, once he knew his father better, later,
and later, knew himself better, what it would mean.

—*Dan Chiasson*

was an extremely competent manager of the enterprise, and his public cheerleading for the games refurbished their reputation. Harvard Business School has taught Romney's turnaround of the Olympics as a case study. The study, written by the Business School professor H. Kent Bowen, is filled with detailed charts, complicated matrixes, and screen shots from software that Romney and his chief operating officer, Fraser Bullock, used to track their progress as they reorganized the committee. One exhibit from early 2001 offers a glimpse into the limits of the management-consultant world view: a list of twenty-eight "potential risk factors," which are divided into three tiers based on their probability and impact. No. 28, at the bottom of Tier 3, is "threat or act of terrorism."

In his first year as governor, 2003, Romney learned a lesson about the differences between management theory and governance. After he was elected, he asked Bain & Company to evaluate the state's education system, and the Bain-assisted review formed the basis of a radical overhaul that would have increased fees and dismantled the system in place at the University of Massachusetts. In the corporate world, the Bainies, whose power emanated from the C.E.O.'s office, could implement their plans by diktat. On Beacon Hill, Romney had to deal with a Democratic legislature. The Bain education plan never passed. Still, in his last year in office, Romney used a very Bain-like approach—rigorously studying the problem, coming up with a solution based on empiricism, not ideology, and working hard at implementation—to propose a universal-health-care plan for the state and see it passed. Ever since he became a Presidential candidate, Romney has been ambivalent about this success. Sometimes he boasts about it, but at other moments he is uncharacteristically understated. "I like the plan we passed in Massachusetts," he said in Santa Clara. "It's not perfect. I liked the one I proposed. The legislature changed it in some ways I wouldn't have thought about. But I think it is a step forward."

Romney's Presidential campaign is perhaps the best indicator of the potential and the limits of Bainism. In G.O.P. political circles, it is frequently cited as being more competently run than any of his opponents' operations. Although Romney is relying more and more on his personal wealth—he has donated seventeen million dollars of his own money to his campaign—he has also raised forty-five million dollars, almost as much as the leading Republican fund-raiser, Rudy Giuliani, who has raised forty-seven million dollars. And Romney, who started the race as a relatively unknown governor, has made the most progress in polls in the early primary states, though he lags far behind nationally. One Monday this fall, I spent the day at his headquarters in Boston. The campaign takes up two floors of an old law firm in the North End, Boston's Little Italy. It was the day after the fund-raising quarter closed, and aides were nervously monitoring the news, checking developments about Romney's opponents. When I walked into the office of Matt Rhoades, Romney's communications director, he was puzzling over some remarks made by Senator John McCain, in which McCain tried to clarify a statement that America was founded as a Christian nation. Attempting to explain himself, McCain told reporters, "It's almost Talmudic. We are a nation based on Judeo-Christian values." Rhoades typed the word "Talmudic" into dictionary.com.

Romney's strategy was perhaps best summarized by the atmosphere in the office of his campaign manager, Beth Myers. On the wall were maps of the first states to vote in caucuses and primaries—Iowa, New Hampshire, and Michigan. On a bookshelf opposite were thick binders of research on Romney's top opponents. The spine of one binder said "John McCain, an Unreliable Republican." Another said "Rudy Giuliani, Left...Not Right." The maps are a reminder that Romney probably has only one path to winning the Republican nomination: he must win the early contests in Iowa and New Hampshire, states where he has been leading in the polls, and create enough momentum and media attention to carry him through to February 5th, when some twenty states will vote—including New York and California, where Romney is barely known. The labels on the research binders reinforced the idea that Romney's strategy rests on presenting himself as the true conservative Republican in the race, and on making the sale.

Napoleon Hill himself would be impressed with the planning and persistence that Romney has displayed in trying to convert conservatives to his cause. In every Republican debate, he glows with the bright effervescence of a born salesman. But a political campaign may not be as susceptible to the strategies of management consulting as a business, where advising a corporation to reinvent itself is standard practice. Romney's strategic audit of the 2008 campaign suggested that his party was hungry for a reliable Republican. For Romney, the danger is that of going too far in attempting to please every constituency. In doing so, he may have underestimated the importance of authenticity, an asset that in politics is sometimes more valuable than ideological purity. ♦

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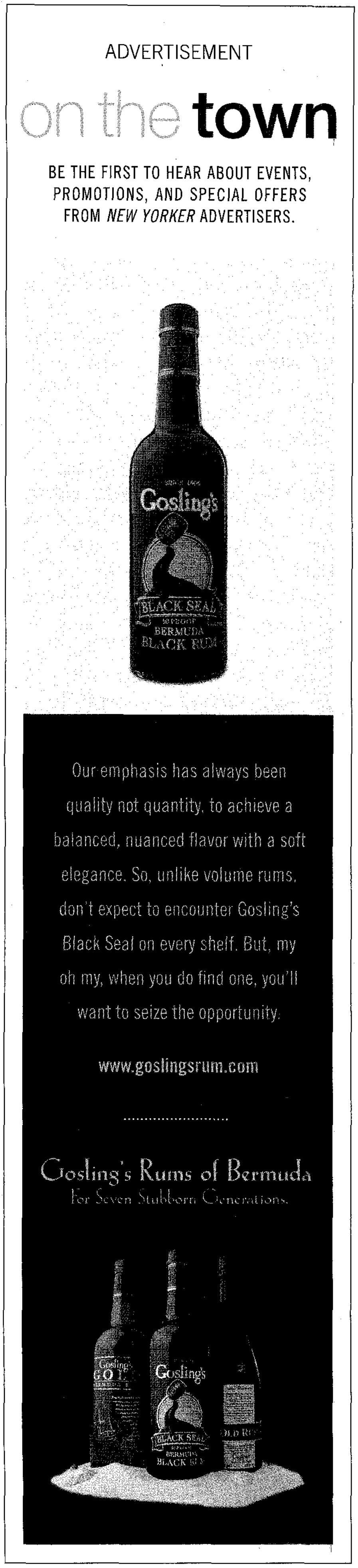
Ryan Lizza talks about Mitt Romney.



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SHOUTS & MURMURS

RECAP

BY IAN FRAZIER

> Keeping a dream journal is also said to promote better recall and to train people to identify signs that indicate they are dreaming—chatting with the deceased, floating cars, talking skeletons.
>
> —*The Times.*

"I'll have a Rudy's Special, No. 3," the talking skeleton said to the man behind the deli counter. Then he turned to me. "Can you believe those Mets?" the talking skeleton asked. "Have you ever seen such a pathetic choke in your entire life?" The talking skeleton's teeth made a kind of clacking sound as he talked, and his nose holes had some not yet decomposed cartilage hanging from them, and a single ant was walking around the inside of one of his eye sockets, counterclockwise.

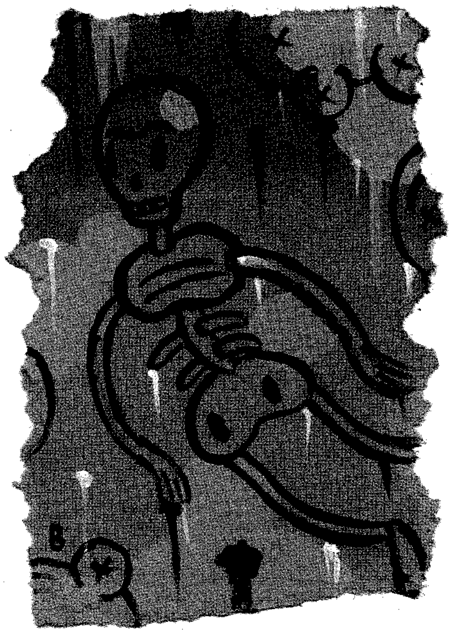
Normally, I'm a bit shy about talking to people, much less to skeletons fresh from the grave, so I just nodded in agreement. But then I couldn't help adding, "Don't blame Willie Randolph, though!" (I've always liked Willie, since back before he was the Mets' manager, when he was a kid playing for the Yankees.)

The talking skeleton jumped on my remark like it was a slow roller to third. "Absolutely not!" the talking skeleton said, with some heat. "No *way* is that fold-o Willie's fault! But you know who I *do* blame?" He leaned his talking-skeleton head—his skull, technically—close to me.

Talking skeletons always look cheerful, with that grinning skull-mouth they have, but don't let that fool you—they can get really mad. "Rickey Henderson!" the talking skeleton almost yelled, clackingly. "I blame Rickey Henderson!" Then the skeleton went on about what a dumb idea it was for the Mets to hire Henderson as a base-running coach, especially after the incident back in '99, when he played cards in the clubhouse, and so on.

At this point, I was starting to wonder how a talking skeleton was going to eat a Rudy's Special, No. 3, anyway. It's delicious, but it's like a chicken-parmesan patty on a roll, with melted cheese and sauce on top. I could imagine long ropes of melted cheese getting stuck on the talking skeleton's many sharp surfaces and creating quite a mess. But, hey, he wants a No. 3, that's his business.

Now the talking skeleton was leaving. At the door, he turned and intoned, skeletonlike, "It was the worst collapse in the entire history of organized baseball!" Then he clattered out.



GARY BASEMAN

Quite honestly, I had begun to think I was dreaming.

Somehow, I didn't feel hungry enough for a No. 3, so I just ordered a liverwurst on rye with lettuce and mustard, and a Diet Coke. Just then, my cell phone started vibrating in my pocket. I took it out and saw that the call was from Jawaharlal Nehru, the late Prime Minister of India, calling from Mumbai. Better take that call.

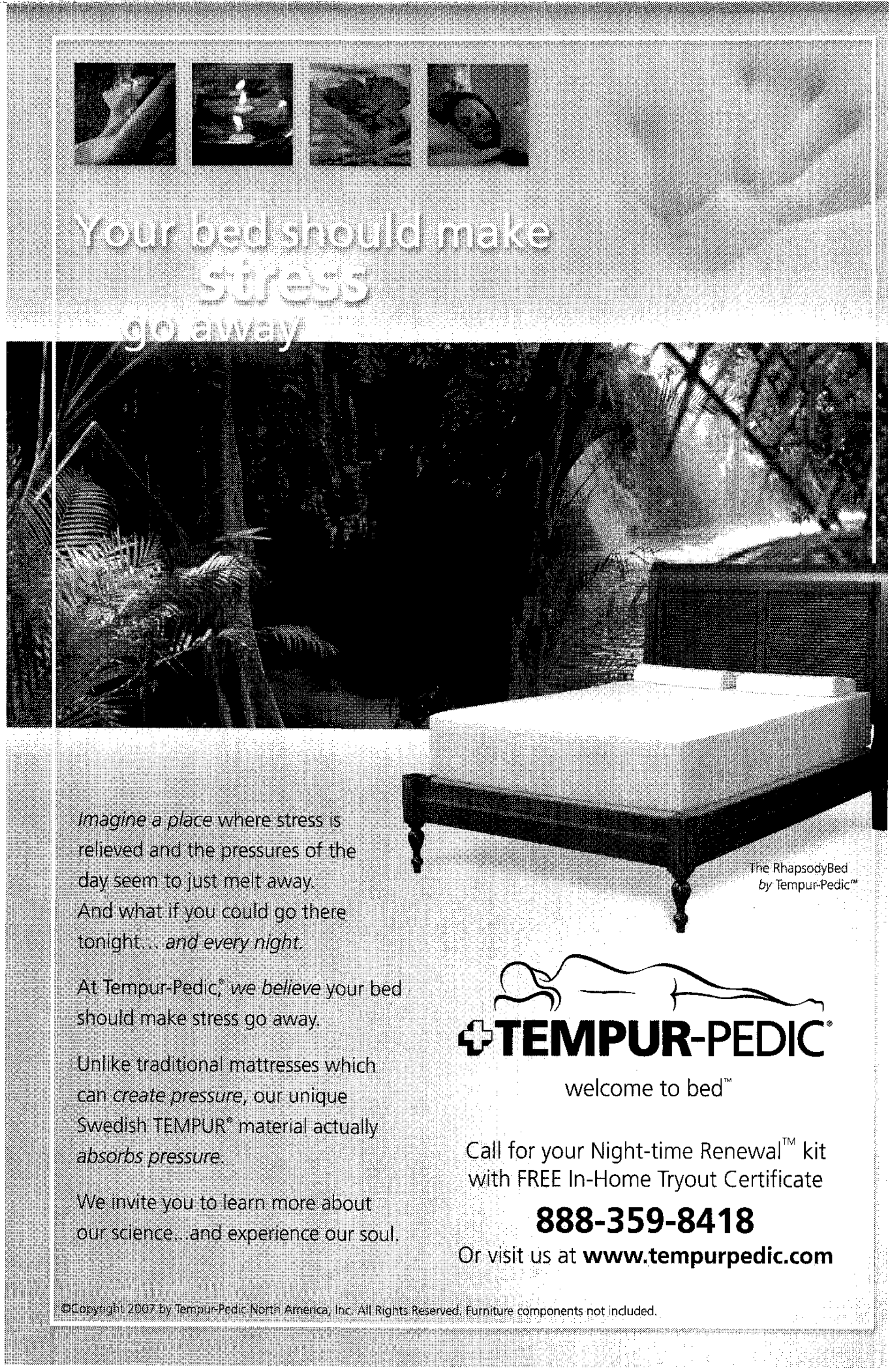
"Jawaharlal, buddy," I said, fumbling for the bills to pay for my sandwich. "How goes it? Did you see the game?"

Just then, the talking skeleton came back in. "Is that Nehru?" he asked. "Let me talk to him when you're done." I nodded my head and held up one finger, indicating that he could have the phone in a minute.

"... most certainly did see the game," Nehru was saying. "I watched all but the ninth inning on the small-screen TV in my invisible floating limousine." Nehru, in case you've forgotten, was elected president of the Indian National Congress six times, and became India's Prime Minister in 1947, helping the country through its difficult early years of independence while scouting for the old Milwaukee Braves. He proceeded to give me, and then the talking skeleton, an earful about the failures of the Mets' front office, coming down particularly hard on the assistant general manager, Tony Bernazard, whom he accused of undercutting Willie every chance he (Bernazard) got.

A vague sense of disquiet began to steal over me. What, I wondered, could the Mets have done differently last season? And why was I wearing only underpants? True, the weather had been unusually warm for October, and anyone as upset as I had been about the Mets' catastrophic disgrace could hardly be expected to pay much attention to clothes. Still, I wished that I had thought to bring a robe or a towel along, and that Lastings Milledge had run out one or two more ground balls. To add to that, the entire delicatessen and all the people in it had begun to plummet through space at an alarming rate, going down in a giant vortex-whirlpool thing that was kind of a dark green at the outer edges and became a blinding white the closer you got to the center, making it even harder to concentrate.

The answer, I think, is training. Each of us has a job to do. The Mets have to go back to good, hard, solid, fundamental baseball and focus on doing the little things right. That means not trying to steal third with two men out, Mr. José Reyes! And, as for me, I have got to start being more conscientious about my dream journal. I've been letting that slide, I admit. With a little discipline and training and the help of my journal, I'll be able to recognize the important signs. Talking skeleton equals dream. Chatting with the dead: dream. Floating cars (or any other normally earthbound vehicle): dream. Mets losing first place to the Phillies on the last day of the season: reality. Once I hone those reactions until they're second nature so that I don't even have to think about them, I'll be better off. ♦



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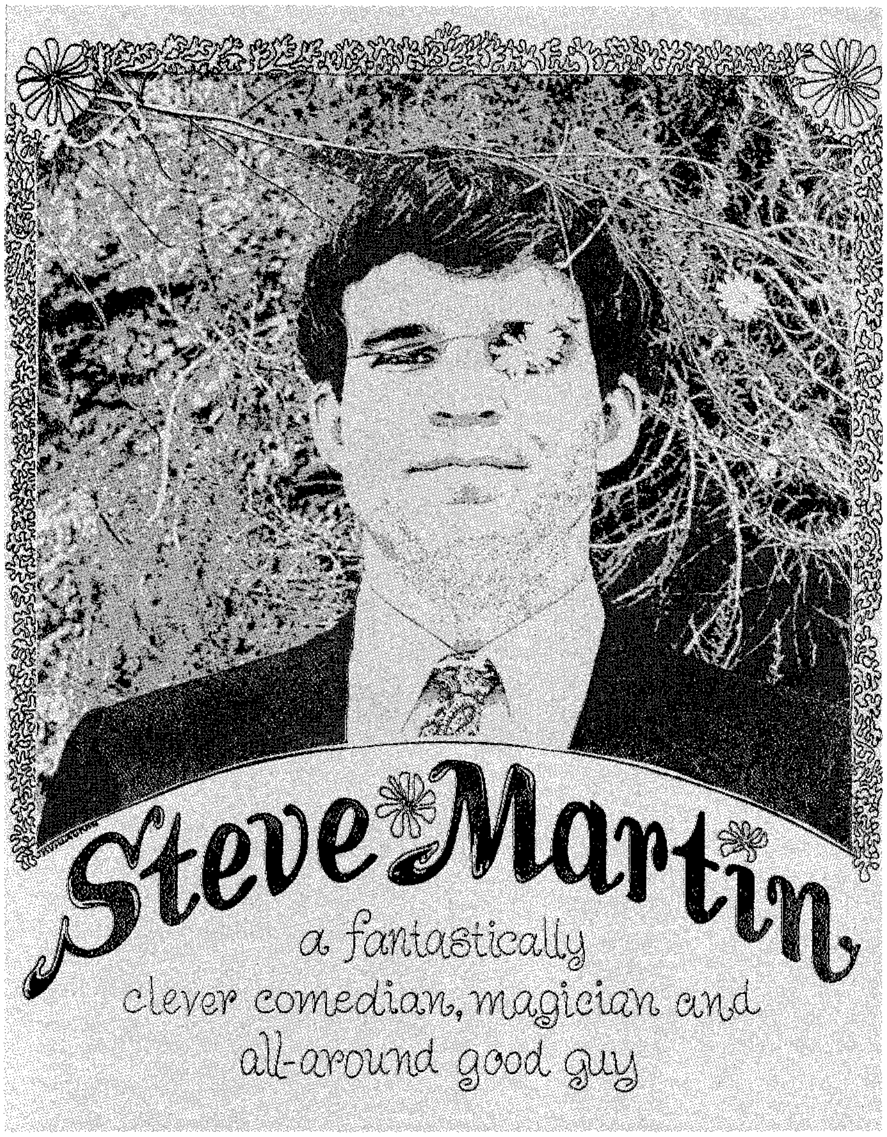
PERSONAL HISTORY

IN THE BIRD CAGE

Finding out what funny is.

BY STEVE MARTIN



Martin in an ad for his act at the Ice House, a folk club in Pasadena, in 1967.

During the nineteen-sixties, the five-foot-high hand-painted placard in front of the Bird Cage Theatre at Knott's Berry Farm read "World's Greatest Entertaiment." The missing "n" in "entertainment" was overlooked by staff, audience, and visitors for an entire decade. I worked there between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two as an actor in melodramas. Knott's Berry Farm began in the twenties, when Walter and Cordelia Knott set up a roadside berry stand. A few years later, Cordelia opened her chicken-dinner restaurant, and Walter bought pieces of a ghost town and moved the Old West buildings to his burgeoning tourist destination. Squawking peacocks roamed the grounds, and there was a little wooden chapel that played organ music while you stared at a picture of Jesus and watched his eyes magically open.

My first performances for a paying audience were at the Bird Cage, a wooden theatre with a canvas roof. Inside were two hundred folding chairs on risers, arranged around a thrust Masonite stage that sat behind a patch of fake grass. A painted cutout of a birdcage, worthy of a Sotheby's folk-art auction, hung over center stage, and painted representations of drapes framed the proscenium. The actors swept the stage, raised and lowered the curtains, cleaned the house of trash, and went out on the grounds pitching the show to visitors strolling around the park. I was being paid two dollars a show, twenty-five shows a week. Even in 1963, the rate was considered low.

The show consisted of a twenty-five-minute melodrama, in which the audience was encouraged to cheer the hero and boo the villain. I appeared in "The Bungling Burglar," performing the role of Hamilton Brainwood, a detective who was attracted to the provocatively named soubrette, Dimples Reardon. Fortunately, I ended up with the virtuous heroine, Angela Trueheart. The play was followed by a ten-minute "olio" segment involving two five-minute routines in which the actors did their specialties, usually songs or short comedy acts, and here I was able to work steadily on my fledgling comedy-magic act, five minutes at a time, four times a day (five on Sunday), for three years.

The Bird Cage was a normal theatrical nuthouse. Missed cues caused noisy pileups in the wings, or a missing prop left us hanging while we ad-libbed excuses to leave the stage and retrieve it. A forgotten line would hang in the air, searching for someone, anyone, to say it. The theatre was run by Woody Wilson, a dead ringer for W. C. Fields, and a boozer, too, and the likable George Stuart, who, on Saturday nights, would entertain the crowd with a monologue that had them roaring: "You're from Tucson? I spent a week there one night!" Four paying customers was officially an audience, so we often did shows to resonating silence. On one of these dead afternoons, Woody Wilson peed so loudly in the echoing bathroom that it broke us up and got embarrassed laughs from our conservative family audience.

The theatre was stocked with genuine characters. Ronnie Morgan, rail thin, would dress up as Lincoln and read the Gettysburg Address for local elementary schools. On a good day, he would show us young lads cheesecake photos of his

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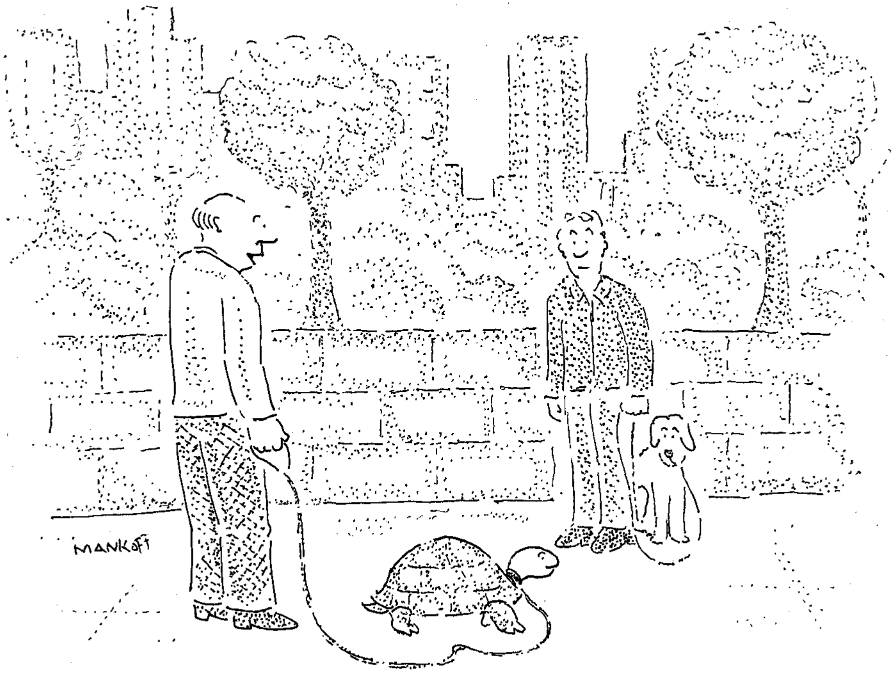
wife in a leopard-skin bikini, and even at age eighteen we thought it was weird. There was Joe Carney, a blustery and funny actor, who opened the lavatory door from the top to avoid germs. Paul Shackleton was the son of a preacher and could not tolerate a swear word, but he once laughed till he cried when we sat down under a eucalyptus tree to drink our Cokes and a bird shit on my head. For days we could not look each other in the eye without breaking into uncontrollable hysterics. John Stuart, a talented tenor with a mischievous sense of humor, once secretly put talcum powder in my top hat. Onstage, whenever I popped the hat on or off, a mushroom cloud of smoke bloomed from my head, leaving me bewildered as to why the audience was laughing.

Stormie Sherk, later to become an enormously successful Christian author and proselytizer under her married name, Stormie Omartian, was beautiful, witty, bright, and filled with an engaging spirit that was not yet holy. We performed in the melodramas together; my role was either the comic or the leading man, depending on the day of the week. She wore calico dresses that complemented her strawberry-blond hair and vanilla skin. Soon we were in love and would roam around Knott's in our period costumes and find a period place to sit, mostly by the period church next to the man-made lake, where we would stare endlessly into each other's eyes. We developed a love duet for the Bird Cage in which she would sing "Gypsy Rover" while I accompanied her on the five-string banjo. When she sang the song, the lyric that affected me the most was—believe it or not—"La dee doo la dee doo dah day." We would talk of a wedding in a lilac-covered dale, and I could fill any conversational gaps with ardent recitations of poetry by Keats and Shelley, which I picked up at Santa Ana Junior College. Finally, the inevitable happened. I was a late-blooming eighteen-year-old when I had my first sexual experience, involving the virginal Stormie, a condom (swiped from my parents' drawer), and the front seat of my car, whose windows became befogged with desire.

If Stormie had said I would look good in a burgundy ball gown, I would have gone out and bought a burgundy ball gown. Instead, she suggested that I read W. Somerset Maugham's "The Razor's Edge," a book about a quest for knowledge—universal, unquestionable knowledge. I was swept up in the book's glorification of truth-seeking, and the idea that, like a stage magician, I could have secrets possessed by only a few. Santa Ana Junior College offered no major in philosophy, so I enrolled at Long Beach State. I paid the tuition with my Bird Cage wages, aided in my second year by a dean's list scholarship (a hundred and eighty dollars a year) achieved through impassioned studying, fuelled by my "Razor's Edge" romanticism. I rented a small apartment near school, so small that its street number was 1059¼. Stormie eventually moved an hour north to attend U.C.L.A., and we struggled for a while to see each other, but without the metaphor of the nineteenth century to enchant us we realized that our real lives lay before us, and we drifted apart.



"My doctor told me to take it easy."

At the Bird Cage, I formed the soft primordial core of what became my comedy act. Over the three years I worked there, I strung together everything I knew: some comedy juggling, a few standard magic routines, a couple of banjo songs, and some very old jokes. My act was eclectic, and it would take ten more years for me to make sense of it. However, the opportunity to perform four or five times a day gave me confidence and poise. Even though my material had few distinguishing features, the repetition helped me lose my amateur rattle.

Catalyzed by the popularity of the folk group the Kingston Trio, small music clubs began to sprout in every unlikely venue. Shopping malls and restaurant cellars now had corner-stage showrooms that sometimes did and sometimes did not serve alcohol. There were almost no clubs dedicated to comedy—they would not exist for at least another fifteen years—so every comedian was an outsider. Having no agent or any hope of finding one, I could not audition for movies or television, or even learn where auditions were held. I didn't know about the trade papers—*Variety* or *The Hollywood Reporter*—from which I might have gathered some information. I lived in suburbia at a time when the hour-long drive to Los Angeles in my first great car—a white 1957 Chevy Bel Air, which, despite its beauty, guzzled quarts of oil and then spewed it back out in the form of white smoke—seemed like a trip across the continent in a Conestoga wagon. But the local folk clubs thrived on single acts, and their Monday nights were reserved for budding talent. Standup comedy felt like an open door. It was possible to assemble a few minutes of material and be onstage that week, as opposed to standing in line in the mysterious world of Hollywood, getting no response, no phone calls returned, and no opportunity to perform. On Mondays, I could tour around Orange County, visit three clubs in one night, and be onstage, live, in front of an audience. If I flopped at the Paradox in Tustin, I might succeed an hour later at the Ice House in Pasadena.

I continued to attend Long Beach State, taking Stormie-inspired courses in metaphysics, ethics, and logic. New and exhilarating words such as "epistemology," "ontology," "pragmatism," and "existentialism"—whose definitions alone were stimulating—swirled through my head and reconfigured my thinking. One semester, I was taking Philosophy of Language, Continental Rationalism (whatever that is), History of Ethics, and, to complete the group, Self-Defense, which I found especially humiliating when, one afternoon in class, I was nearly beaten up by a girl wearing boxing gloves.

A college friend lent me some comedy records. There were three by Mike Nichols and Elaine May, several by Lenny Bruce, and one by Tom Lehrer, the great song parodist. Nichols and May recorded without an audience, and I fixated on every nuance. Their comedy was sometimes created by only a subtle vocal shift: Tell me, Dr. Schweitzer, "exactly what is this *reverence for life*?" Lenny Bruce, on the records I heard, was doing mostly nonpolitical bits that were hilarious. Warden at a prison riot: "We'll meet any reasonable demands you men want! Except the vibrators!" Tom Lehrer influenced me with one bizarre joke about an individualist friend "whose name was Henry, only to give you an idea of what an individualist he was he spelled it H-E-N-3-R-Y." Some people fall asleep at night listening to music; I fell asleep to Lenny, Tom, and Mike and Elaine. These albums broke ground and led me to a Darwinian discovery: comedy could evolve.

On campus, I experienced a life-changing moment of illumination, appropriately occurring in the bright sun. I was walking across the quad when a startling thought came to me: to implement the new concept called originality that was presenting itself in my classes in literature, poetry, and philosophy, I would have to write everything in my comedy act myself. Any line or idea with even a vague feeling of familiarity or provenance had to be expunged. There could be nothing that made the audience feel that they weren't seeing something utterly new.

This realization mortified me. I did not know how to write comedy—at all. But I did know that I would have to drop some of my best one-liners, pilfered from gag books or other people's routines, and consequently lose a major portion of my already strained act. The thought of losing all this material was depressing. After several years of working up my weak twenty minutes, I was now starting from almost zero.

I added poetry readings by T. S. Eliot and Stephen Vincent Benét to fill time, but I was desperate to invent new material. Sitting in a science class, my wandering mind searching for ideas, I stared at the periodic table of the elements that hung behind the professor. That weekend, I went onstage at the Ice House and announced, "And now I would like to do a dramatic reading of the periodic table of the elements: 'Fe . . . Au . . . He.' " That bit didn't last long.

In logic class, I opened my textbook—the last place I was expecting to find comic inspiration—and was startled to find that the author Lewis Carroll was also a logician. He wrote logic textbooks and included argument forms based on the syllogism, normally presented in logic books this way:

(1) All men are mortal.
(2) Socrates is a man.
Therefore Socrates is mortal.

But Carroll's were convoluted, and they struck me as funny in a new way:

(1) Babies are illogical.
(2) Nobody is despised who can manage a crocodile.
(3) Illogical persons are despised.
Therefore babies cannot manage crocodiles.

And,

(1) No interesting poems are unpopular among people of real taste.
(2) No modern poetry is free from affectation.
(3) All your poems are on the subject of soap bubbles.
(4) No affected poetry is popular among people of real taste.
(5) Only a modern poem would be on the subject of soap bubbles.
Therefore all your poems are uninteresting.

These word games bothered and intrigued me. Appearing to be silly nonsense, on examination they were absolutely logical—yet they were still funny. Lewis Carroll's clever fancies from the nineteenth century expanded my notion of what comedy could be. I began closing my show by announcing, "I'm not going home tonight. I'm going to Bananaland, a place where only two things are true, only two things: one, all chairs are green; and, two, no chairs are green." Not at Lewis Carroll's level, but the line worked for my contemporaries, and I loved implying that the one thing I believed in was a contradiction.

My college roommate, Phil Carey, was an artist and musician. He sang bass, not in a barbershop quartet but for a sophisticated chorale that favored complicated rhythms and mismatched twelve-tone arrangements. Phil's contagious enthusiasm got me excited about art, particularly the avant-garde, and we quickly noted that the campus art scene was also a great arena in which to meet girls. We loved reading magazine reports of New York galleries stuffed with Warhol's Brillo boxes and giant flowers, Lichtenstein's cartoon panels, and throngs of people dressed in black. Phil had a developed sense of humor: his cat was named Miles, and when asked if the cat was named after Miles Davis, Phil would say, "No, it was 'and miles to go before I sleep.' "

Working on a college project about Charles Ives, Phil landed an interview with Aaron Copland. However, he would have to drive from Los Angeles to Peekskill, New York, to conduct it. I jumped at the chance to go along. In the summer of 1966—I was still twenty and proud that I would make it to New York City before I turned twenty-one—we installed a homemade cot in the back of my coughing blue windowless VW bus and drove across America without stopping. I was trying to write like E. E. Cummings, so my letters to my college girlfriend Nina, all highly romantic, goopy, and filled with references to flowers and stars, read like amateur versions of his poems.

Three days after we left Los Angeles, Phil and I arrived at Copland's house, a low-slung A-frame with floor-to-ceiling windows, in a dappled forest by the road. We knocked on the door, Copland answered, and over his shoulder we saw a group of men sitting in the living room wearing what looked like skimpy black thongs. He escorted us back to a flagstone patio, where I had the demanding job of turning the tape recorder on and off while Phil asked questions about Copland's creative process. We emerged a half hour later with the coveted interview and got in the car, never mentioning the men in skimpy black thongs, because, like trigonometry, we couldn't quite comprehend it.

After a detour to Cambridge, Massachusetts, to cruise the home of my idol Cummings, we drove in to glorious Manhattan. Saucer-eyed, we hustled over to the Museum of Modern Art, where we saw, among the Cézannes and the Matisses, Dalí's famous painting of melting clocks, the shockingly tiny "Persistence of Memory." We were dismayed to find that Warhol and Lichtenstein had not yet been ordained.

Before we left Cambridge, I sent this postcard to Nina:

> Dear Nina,
> Today, (about an hour ago) I stood in front of e. e. cummings's home at Harvard; his wife is still living there—we saw her. But the most fantastic thing was when we asked directions to Irving Street, the person we asked said to tell Mrs. Cummings hello from the Jameses! She turned out to be William James's great-granddaughter!

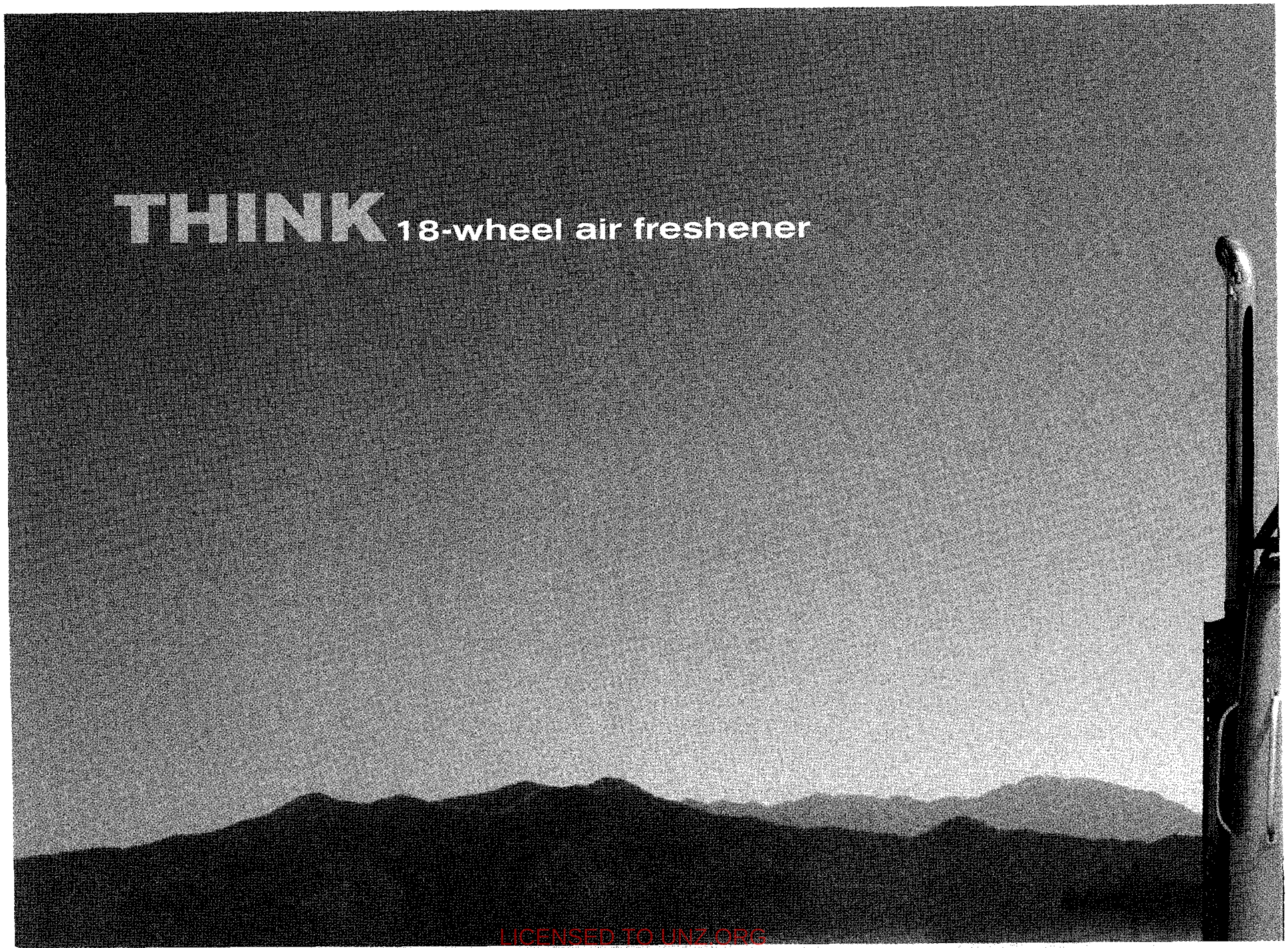
Then I added:

> I have decided my act is going to go avant-garde. It is the only way to do what I want.

I'm not sure what I meant, but I wanted to use the lingo, and it was seductive to make these pronouncements. Through the years, I have learned that there is no harm in charging oneself up with delusions between moments of valid inspiration.

At the Ice House in Pasadena, I had met the comedian George McKelvey. George had an actual career and was quite funny. In reference to radio's invisible crime fighter the Shadow, he would ask, "If you could be invisible, what would you do? [long pause] Fight crime?" He was in Aspen, Colorado, during spring break, about to work a small folk club, when he broke his leg skiing. Could I fill in for him? he asked. He generously offered me all his salary—I think it was three hundred dollars for the two weeks, which would be more than I had ever earned, anywhere, anytime. I was twenty-one years old when I headed for the free-wheeling ski resort.

In March of 1967, I arrived at a prefab house just outside Aspen. Visiting entertainers were bunked there, and after I made my way through the crunchy snow and stowed my suitcase under my bed several of us introduced ourselves. One was my co-bill, John McClure, a lanky guitarist with an acute sense of humor. Wandering in later was a pretty waitress named Linda Byers, who, I assumed, would fall for me because of my carefully designed, poetry-quoting, artist's persona, but who, to my surprise, chose John, and they formed a long-term relationship. Also in the house was one of the few English comedians working in America, Jonathan

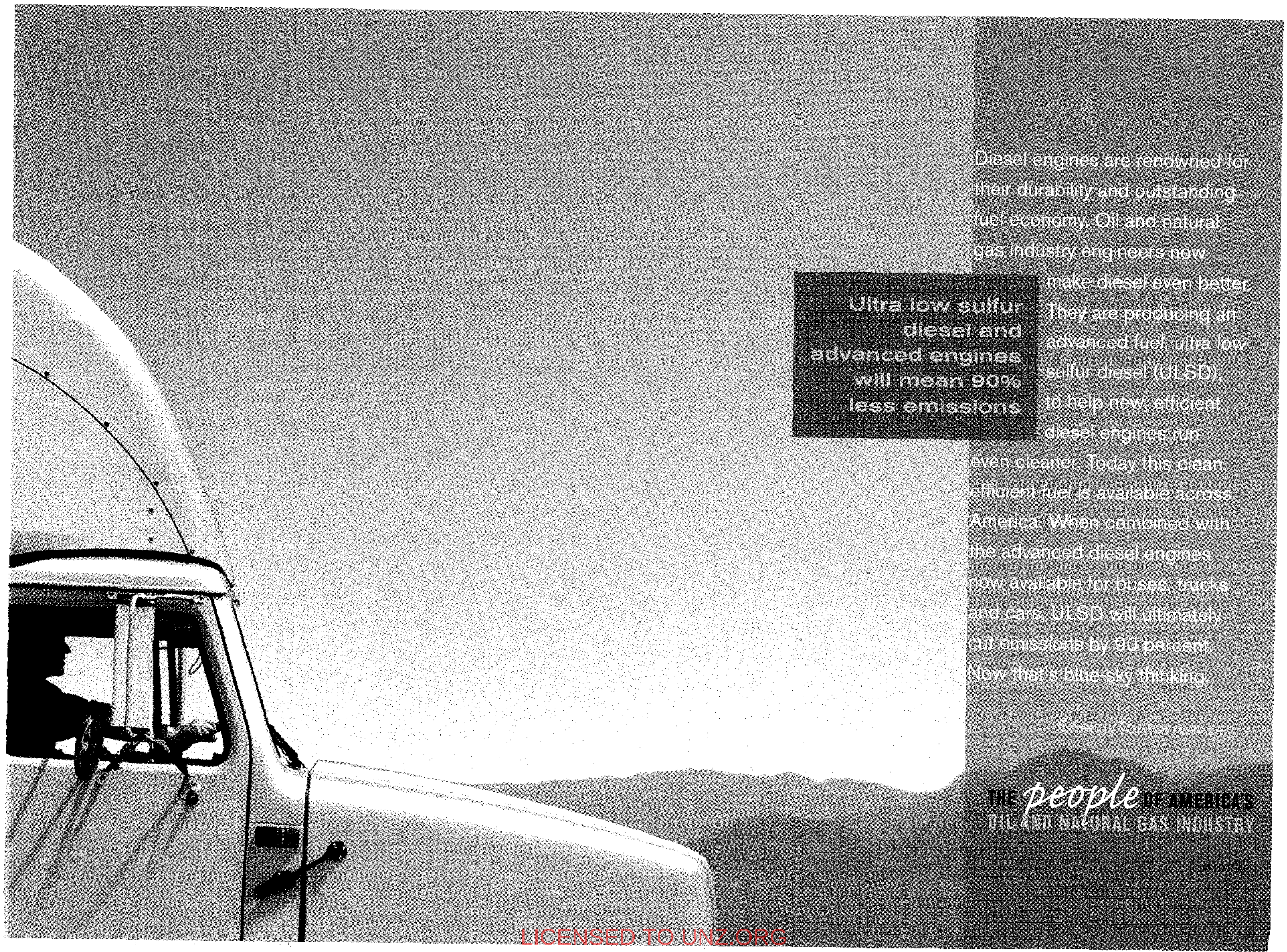


Moore, who played a bagpipe to open his act, scaring the audience with its ancient howl as he entered the club from behind them. Jonathan was older than the rest of us. He had been around, wore sunglasses indoors, and had the charm of a well-spoken cynic.

The night club, the Abbey Cellar on Galena Street, was a basement in the middle of town and hard even for us to find. John and I, in order to drum up business, left little cards on the tables in the upstairs restaurant that read "Steve Martin / John McClure, Entertainment Ordinaire," which to me was hilariously funny but never seemed to be noticed as a joke.

Aspen was no place for poetry readings, and they were stripped permanently from my act. I was now doing my triptych of banjo playing, comedy, and magic. One evening at the Abbey Cellar, I had my first experience with a serious heckler, who, sitting at a front table with his wife and another straight-looking couple, stood up and said, "See if you think this is funny," and threw a glass of red wine at me. The problem for him was that, at this point in the evening, the employees outnumbered the audience. A few seconds later, John McClure and the rough, tough Irish bartender appeared like centurions and escorted him out. Eventually, his friends slunk out, too. The expulsion had a downside: the audience was now smaller by two-thirds and in shock, and sat in stunned silence for the rest of my show. Later, I developed a few defensive lines to use against the unruly: "Oh, I remember when I had my first beer." And if that didn't cool them off I would use a psychological trick. I would lower my voice and continue with my act, talking almost inaudibly. The audience couldn't hear the show, and they would shut the heckler up on their own.

My experience at the Abbey Cellar was important to me, but not as important as what was going on after hours. John and I shared a room, and Linda would join us for lengthy chats. What we discussed was the new Zeitgeist. I don't know how it got to this bedroom in Aspen, but it was creeping everywhere simultaneously. I didn't know its name yet but found out later that it was called Flower Power, and I was excited to learn that we were now living in the Age of Aquarius, an age when, at least astrologically, the world would be taken over by macramé. Anticorporate, individual, and freak-based, the new philosophy proposed that all we had to do was love each other and there would be no more wars or strife. Nothing could have seemed newer or more appealing. The word "love" was being tossed around as though only we insiders knew its definition. The vast numbers of us who changed our lives around this belief proved that, yes, it is possible to fool all of the people some of the time. But any new social philosophy is good for creativity. New music was springing up, new graphics twisted and swirled as if on LSD, and an older generation was being glacially inched aside to make room for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the freshly weaned new one. (The art world, always contrarian, responded to psychedelia with monochrome and minimalism.) It was fun trying to "turn" a young conservative, which was easy because our music was better. I remember trying to convince a visiting member of the Dallas Ski Club that "Yummy, Yummy, Yummy (I've Got Love in My Tummy)" was not really a good song, no matter how much he liked it. After two weeks in Aspen, I went back to Los Angeles feeling like an anointed prophet, taking my friends aside and burping out the new philosophy.

I continued to pursue my studies and half believed I might try for a doctorate in philosophy and become a teacher (teaching is, after all, a form of show business). I'm not sure what the purpose of fooling myself was, but I toyed with the idea for several semesters. I concluded that not to continue with comedy would leave a question in my mind that would nag me for the rest of my life: Could I have had a career in performing? Everything was dragging me toward the arts; even the study of modern philosophy suggested that philosophy was nonsense. A classmate, Ron Barnette, and I spent hours engaged in late-night mind-altering dialogues in laundromats and parking lots, discussing Wittgenstein, whose investigations disallowed so many types of philosophical discussions that we became convinced that the very discussion we were having was impossible. Soon I felt that a career in the irrational world of creativity not only made sense but had moral purpose.

I was living several lives at once: I was a student at Long Beach State; I still worked at the Bird Cage Theatre; and at night I performed in various folk clubs with an eclectic, homemade comedy routine that was held together with wire and glue. I was still an opening act, and one of the clubs I played was Ledbetter's, a comparatively classy beer-and-wine nightspot a few blocks from U.C.L.A. that catered to the college crowd. Fats Johnson, a jovial folksinger who dressed to kill in black suits with white ruffled shirts and wore elaborate rings on his guitar-strumming hand, often headlined the club. One night, I asked him about his philosophy of dressing for the stage. He said, firmly, "Always look better than they do."

Now that most of my work was in Westwood, Long Beach State, forty miles away, seemed like Siberia. I transferred to U.C.L.A., so I could be closer to the action, and I took several courses there. One was an acting class, the kind that feels like prison camp and treats students like detainees who need to be broken; another was a course in television writing, which seemed practical. I also continued my studies in philosophy. I had done pretty well in symbolic logic at Long Beach, so I signed up for advanced symbolic logic at my new school. Saying that I was studying advanced symbolic logic at U.C.L.A. had a nice ring; what had been nerdy in high school now had mystique. On the first day of class, however, I discovered that U.C.L.A. used a different set of symbols from those I had learned at Long Beach. To catch up, I added Logic 101, which meant I was studying beginning logic and advanced logic at the same time. I was overwhelmed, and shocked to find that I couldn't keep up. I abruptly changed my major to theatre and, free from the workload of my logic classes, took a relaxing inhale of crisp California air. But on the exhale I realized that I was now investing in no other future but show business.

Overnight, there were dozens of new people in my life. Pot smoking was de rigueur—this being the sixties—and even though I was armed with only a comedy act that was at best hit-and-miss, I was fearless and ready to go. Among the crowd of singers and musicians whose local fame I assumed was worldwide was a sylphlike figure, a nonsinger and nonmusician, who nonetheless seemed to be regarded quite highly in this small showbiz matrix. Her name was Melissa, but her friends called her Mitzi. She was twenty-one years old, with a Katharine Hepburn beauty and a similarly willowy frame. She was intelligent, energetic, and lit from within. Her hair was ash brown, and always at the end of one of her long and slender arms was a Nikon camera with a lens the size of a can of Campbell's soup.

When her current romance withered, Mitzi and I became entwined. After several weeks of courtship, I was ready for family inspection, and she invited me to her parents' house for dinner. Mitzi's last name was Trumbo. Her father was the screenwriter Dalton Trumbo, one of the notorious Hollywood Ten, a group of writers and directors who were blacklisted during the Red scare of the late forties. During his congressional hearing, Trumbo vociferously challenged the right of his inquisitors to interrogate him, prompting a frustrated committee member to yell, "This is typical Communist tactics!" in a futile attempt to get him to shut up. It was Trumbo who wrote or co-wrote the screenplays for "Spartacus," "Lonely Are the Brave," "Hawaii," "Exodus," and "Papillon"; whose personal letters read like Swiftian essays; who had to flee to Mexico and stay for several years, writing under pseudonyms such as Sam Jackson and James Bonham in order to escape McCarthyism; and whom, at this stage in my tunnel-visioned life, I had never heard of.

From my perspective, Mitzi was a sophisticate. She had travelled. She was politically aware and had attended Reed College, in Oregon, a bastion of liberal thought. Her intelligence was informed by her family history. When I went to dinner at her home in the Hollywood Hills, I did not know that the months I would spend in this family's graces would broaden my life.

My first glimpse of Dalton Trumbo revealed an engrossed intellect—not finessing his latest screenplay but sorting the seeds and stems from a brick of pot. "Pop smokes marijuana," Mitzi explained, "with the wishful thought of cutting down on his drinking." Sometimes, from their balcony, I would see Trumbo walking laps around the perimeter of the pool. He held a small counter in one hand and clicked it every time he passed the diving board. These health walks were compromised by the cigarette he constantly held in his other hand.

Dalton Trumbo was the first raconteur I ever met. The family dinners—frequented by art dealers, actors, and artists of all kinds, including the screenwriters Hugo Butler and Ring Lardner, Jr., and the director George Roy Hill—were lively, political, and funny. I had never been in a house where conversations were held during dinner or where food was placed before me after being prepared behind closed doors. It was also the first time I ever heard swear words spoken by adults in front of their offspring. Lyndon Johnson's Vietnam bombing policy dominated the conversation, and the government's ironfisted response to war protesters rankled the dinner guests, since the Hollywood Ten were all familiar with oppression. Trumbo had a patriarchal delivery whether he was on a rant or discussing art or slinging wit, but nothing he said was élitist—though I do remember him saying, as he spread his arms to indicate the china and silver serving ladles, "Admittedly, we do live well."

The Trumbo house was modern, built on a hillside, and extended down three floors into a ravine. The walls in the living room give me my most vivid memory of the house, for they were covered with art. Political art. I had never seen real paintings in a house, and this might have been where my own inclination toward owning pictures began. In the dining room was a William Gropper, depicting members of the House Un-American Activities Committee grotesquely outlined in fluorescent green against a murky background. There was a Raphael Soyer, a Moses Soyer, and a Jack Levine painting of Hindenburg making Hitler chancellor. These artists are obscure today but not forgotten. Gropper's art depicted politicos as porcine bullies, and Jack Levine's well-brushed social realism had a biting edge that fit the politics of the family perfectly.

One afternoon, on the way to the Trumbo house, Mitzi warned me, "Pop's in a bad mood today. He's got a screenplay due in four days and he hasn't started it yet." The screenplay was for the movie "The Fixer," starring Alan Bates. Eventually, the work got done and the movie was ready to shoot. Trumbo encouraged Mitzi to join him, and she was whisked off to Budapest. After I'd received several charming letters from her and then noticed a lag in the regularity of their arrival, Mitzi sent me a gentle and direct Dear John letter. She had been swept away by the director John Frankenheimer, who, twenty years later, tried and failed to seduce my then wife, Victoria Tennant, whom he was directing in a movie. Mitzi was simply too alluring to be left alone in a foreign country, and I was too hormonal to be left alone in Hollywood. Incidentally, Frankenheimer died a few years ago, but it was not I who killed him.

By now I had ingratiated myself with enough folk clubs that I wondered if I could possibly support myself without the security of my steady job at Knott's Berry Farm. Bumping up against age twenty-two, I looked around the Bird Cage and saw actors who had been working there fifteen years and counting, and I knew it could be a trap for me. With some trepidation, I gave notice. Stormie was gone, John Stuart and Paul Shackleton were gone, too, so there were no actual tearful goodbyes. Handshakes with George and Woody. Three years after I had started at the Bird Cage, I slipped away almost unnoticed.

A few years ago, after giving in to a sentimental urge to visit Knott's Berry Farm and the little theatre where I got my start, I found myself in the deserted lobby of the Bird Cage, long since closed. It looked as though time had stopped the day I left. On one wall were photos from various productions, some of them including me as resident goofball. I tugged on the theatre door; it was locked. I was about to give up when I remembered a back entrance in the employees-only area, a clunky, oversized wooden gate that rarely locked because it was so rickety. I sneaked behind the theatre and opened the door, which, for the millionth time, had failed to latch. The darkened theatre flooded with sunlight, and I stepped inside and quickly shut the door. Light filtered in from the canvas roof, giving the Bird Cage a dim, golden hue. There I was, standing in a memory frozen in amber, and I experienced an overwhelming rush of sadness.

I went backstage and had a muscle memory of how to raise and lower the curtain, tying it off with a looping knot shown to me on my first day of work. I fiddled with the sole lighting rheostat, as antique as Edison. I stood on the stage and looked out at the empty theatre and was overcome by the feeling of today being pressed into yesterday. I didn't realize how much this place had meant to me.

Driving home along the Santa Ana Freeway, I was unnerved. I asked myself what it was that had made this place capable of inducing in me such a powerful nostalgic shock. The answer floated clearly into my mind, as though I had asked the question of a Magic 8-Ball: I wanted to be there again—if only for a day—indulging in high spirits and high jinks, before I turned professional, before comedy became serious. ♦

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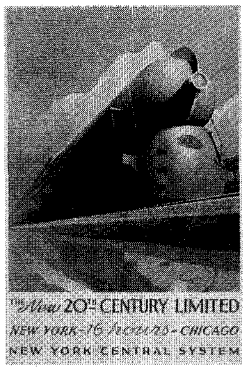

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THE SPORTING SCENE

THE EXTORTIONIST

Scott Boras, the Yankees' bête noire, has changed baseball forever.

BY BEN McGRATH

Scott Boras has season tickets to see the Dodgers, the Angels, the Padres, the Giants, and the A's—a full California sweep. In Los Angeles and Anaheim, he also maintains luxury boxes, but, for the most part, wherever he goes he sits, or sometimes stands, in one of the first few rows directly in back of home plate, cell phone at his ear. Boras represents baseball players—among them the Yankees' Alex Rodriguez (A-Rod), the top-grossing athlete in team sports, Barry Zito, the beneficiary of the largest pitching contract ever signed, and the Mets' Carlos Beltran. Before a game, players will tend to approach the backstop and, in Boras's telling, thank him for the work he does on their behalf. They needn't even be his clients. (Ballplayers are firm believers in trickle-down economics.) Groundskeepers, umpires, and reporters, too, regularly drop by to pay their respects, trading anecdotes for scoops and the feeling of proximity to power. They shake his hand—fingers poking through the protective netting—without quite getting a firm grip.

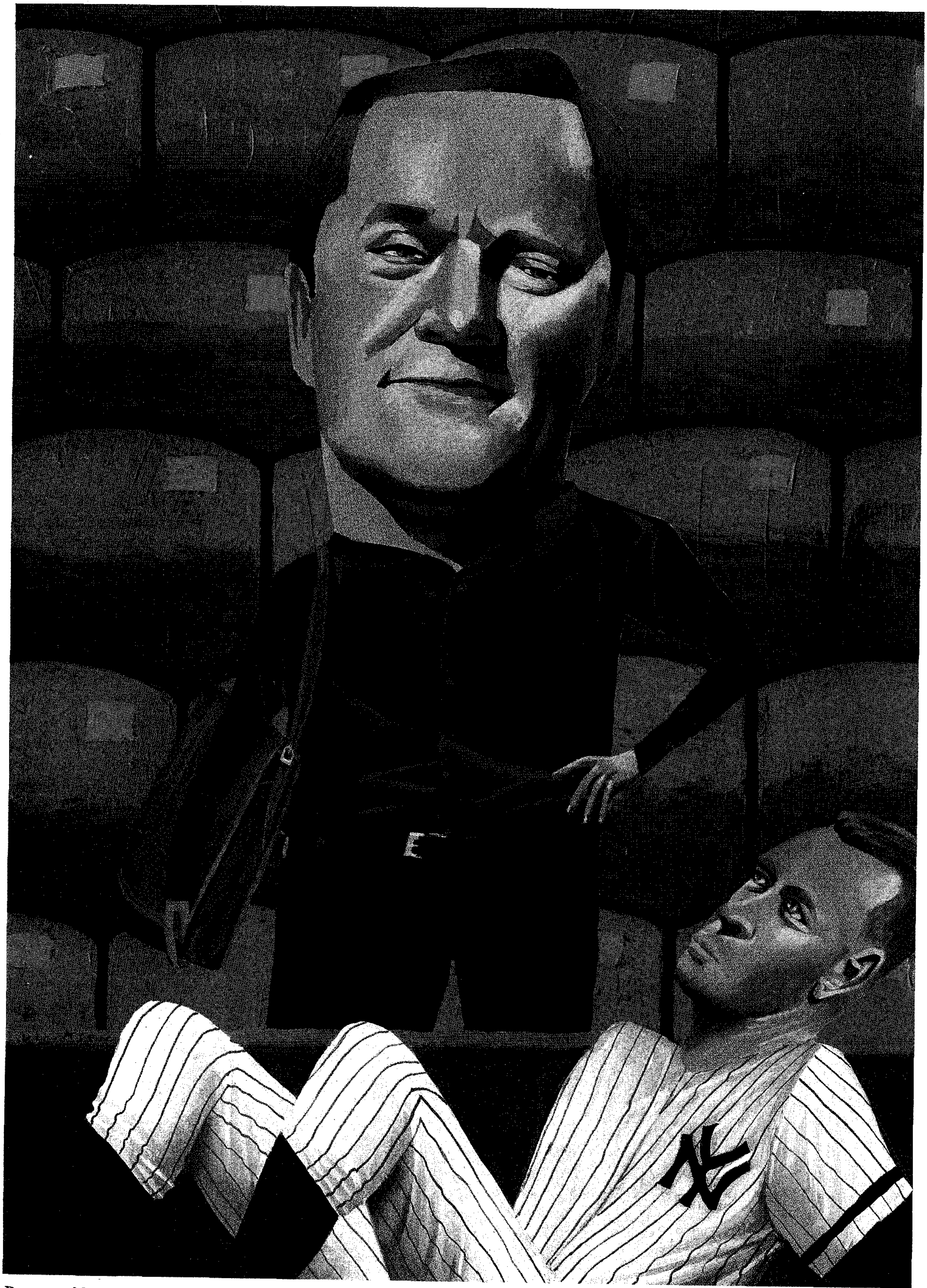
To the extent that lay people still find it offensive when baseball players command salaries equivalent to those of movie stars and underperforming hedge-fund managers, Boras is a convenient bogeyman, and at every ballpark there are bound to be a few hecklers who let him know it. He was brought up Catholic, and, as he told a newspaper reporter earlier this year, "Being Catholic, who you are as a person, you don't appreciate any association with Satan." Still, there is a devilish turn to his smile—a glint of righteous defiance—and if there is a popular association that genuinely troubles him it is more likely that of Jerry Maguire, the smooth-talking Tom Cruise character, whom he does not at all resemble. Maguire is an agent. Boras is an attorney—a master of fine print, not histrionics. You won't find him in a bar with his clients (he prefers the working breakfast), or pleading with them in the locker-room showers. He wears his thinning brown hair combed perfectly across his scalp, left to right, and his clothes are overdeliberate California casual: pressed jeans, polo shirt fully buttoned. Spontaneity has not recently occurred to him. Out of superstition, or some symbolic show of authenticity, he has carried the same beat-up leather satchel for years.

"People call me from the outside world all the time—they want me to *negotiate* everything," Boras says, with a hint of irritation. "I'm not the person who will go out and negotiate anything, at any time, for anyone who happens to wear some sort of uniform." He regards his nominal colleagues—the three hundred-odd agents who have been certified by the Major League Baseball Players Association, and many of whom represent athletes in several sports—as glorified valets. "You have to distinguish between someone who has a sales personality versus someone who is *substantive*, and has a form of legal practice representing individuals who just happen to play a singular sport, baseball," he says. Like a celebrity criminal-defense attorney, Boras serves his rich and cosseted clientele with a high-minded sense of purpose, and he has little use for the notion that his tenacity as an advocate is a reflection of soulless greed. (An old baseball acquaintance of his, George Kissell, likes to joke that only eight people will attend Boras's funeral—"and all eight will be pallbearers.") In fact, Boras is a moralist—he sometimes calls himself the only Democrat in Orange County—and prone to lecture about capitalism and education and the larger meaning of it all. ("I see grand houses of symphonies and performing-arts centers and such, which is great for a community to have, but on the other hand I walk four blocks away and I see a run-down school and I'm wondering, Where are our priorities?") When he talks about baseball, he likes to diagnose the state of the game. "We have no leadoff hitters anymore," he once told me, laying part of the blame on veiled racial discrimination by the N.C.A.A. And, "The eradication of steroids is, frankly, not that noticeable."

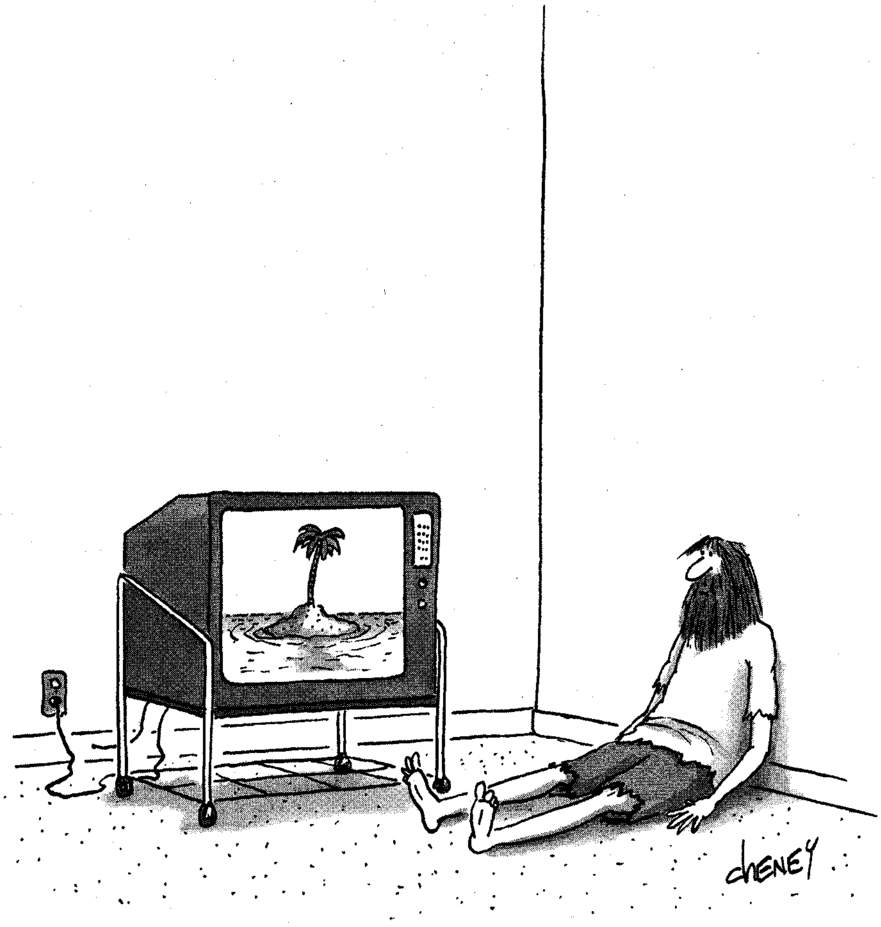
Last December, at *Baseball America's* annual banquet, Boras was named the game's most influential non-player in the twenty-five years since the magazine began publishing, beating out the current Major League Baseball commissioner, Bud Selig, who had recently declared the sport to be in its "golden age," as well as Don Fehr, the longtime head of the Players Association. (The most influential player was Barry Bonds, who is a former Boras client, and similarly regarded.) "I could kind of feel in the room that it was, like, 'What is this? Why is this guy up here? We're baseball people,' " Boras recalls. The banquet is traditionally a feel-good event for management types, with a charitable focus and an emphasis on youth coaching and mentorship. Boras took the stage and delivered a sermon on economics. "What I told them all was: 'You know what this business is about, guys? We've gone from, when I came into it, an industry that made, economically, about five hundred million dollars, and we went to a billion in 1990. We went to three billion in 2000. And now we're near six billion in 2007. What it says for all of us in this room is this: We're doing a good job with the game. We're growing the game, as it should be grown. There's a balance that's needed in the growing of the game, and I provide the balance on one side, and you provide it on the other.' "

The applause was tepid. "You just wanted to crawl behind the curtain," a

MARK ULRIKSEN



Boras and his client Alex Rodriguez, the Yankees' third baseman, whom he has made the top-grossing athlete in team sports.



Baseball America contributor told me. One National League manager considered walking out, in protest. And yet influence, however coolly embraced, can be infectious. Boras, who is fifty-four, seems to have become impatient with mere balance-provision. This spring, he mailed a letter to Commissioner Selig, in which he outlined a proposal to alter the format of the game's most sacred ritual, the World Series. Why not make it nine games, instead of seven, he argued, and hold those extra two games—the first two games—at a neutral site? Cities all over the nation, or even the world, could compete for the honor of playing host, as with the Olympics. "It's a fact that our game needs a forum that's akin to the Super Bowl," Boras explained to me not long after he'd sent the letter. "People don't go to the Super Bowl for the game. Most Super Bowl games are not competitive, or good games. They go there for the event. They go there for the three-day weekend." He described a vision of "corporate hospitality," including a "gala, like the Oscars," during which the M.V.P. and Cy Young awards, among others, would be announced, with all the finalists present and on view, and presumably walking the red carpet in sponsored menswear. Who could argue against such a change? It would mean more money for the owners, more "marketable content" for the media to broadcast, more attention for the stars—more everything.

"He takes himself very seriously," Fay Vincent, the former commissioner, said recently of Boras. "I'm not surprised that he's beginning to make grandiose suggestions." Vincent added that he thought this particular World Series suggestion was "preposterous," and, giving voice to a common complaint of fans and players alike, he said, "I mean, the season goes on endlessly as it is."

Marvin Miller, the pioneering Players Association chief, was more acerbic. "That's a typical example of an agent forgetting what his real role is," Miller said. "He has no function whatsoever in suggesting a change in scheduling. He has absolutely nothing to say about it—not now or ever. But it's quite typical. It's a joke."

These comments preceded by a few months the rumor that Boras was planning to arrange for an unprecedented deal, in which Alex Rodriguez would opt out of his contract with the Yankees, under whose terms he is already paid millions more than any other player, to become part owner of the Chicago Cubs. Rodriguez is thirty-two, and has never played in a World Series game—his gifts have thus far been suppressed in the post-season. Boras believes that he will play until he is forty-five, or long enough to eclipse the career records for hits, home runs, runs batted in, and runs scored, and that he deserves a new compensation package to match such legendary feats. Boras's timing couldn't be better: the Rodriguez standoff has coincided with the seeming implosion of the Yankees, beginning with the loss, last week, of their manager, Joe Torre.

Boras was a ballplayer himself until a series of knee operations ended his career, when he was twenty-six, and still in the minor leagues. Now, almost thirty years later, he has the thick torso and the stiff gait of a former jock, and, according to conventional dugout psychoanalysis, his resentment over not having made it to the Show is palpable—it's what drives him to milk team owners, as stand-ins for the baseball gods, for all the money he can get. But the story of his life, as Boras views it, is a blessed one. Far from feeling betrayed by baseball and its old-boy network of colluding, miserly owners, he believes that he was treated consistently well at every stage of his career, and benefitted from the kind of mentoring that arises from generosity of spirit rather than from contractual obligation. Boras sees the fact that he ultimately failed as a player—that unlucky circumstances intervened to spoil his dream—as an instructive lesson about the harsh odds of the business, not as cause for any personal vendetta.

He grew up on an eight-hundred-acre farm near Elk Grove, California, about fifteen miles from Sacramento. His family raised dairy cattle and, later, cultivated alfalfa and oat hay. As a boy, driving a tractor, Scott listened to San Francisco Giants games called by Russ Hodges and Lon Simmons on KSFO, but he didn't attend his first major-league game until 1968, when he was fifteen and, by then, a star high-school center fielder—a gap hitter with uncommon plate discipline.

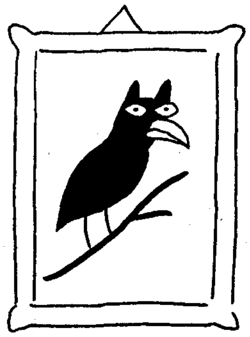
Boras was a strong student—a scholar-athlete in the original, irony-free sense of the phrase—and he spurned inquiries from Ivy League schools, which he couldn't afford, in favor of a scholarship to the University of the Pacific, in nearby Stockton, just outside San Francisco. He majored in chemistry, and the school arranged for him to take private labs after practice, from nine o'clock to midnight. "I was the first athlete to ever have, like, a pre-med-type situation," he told me. After his sophomore year, he applied to a graduate program in industrial pharmacology and was accepted, and began working toward his doctorate concurrently with his B.A. "They told me I'd be the only athlete to be able to go to a professional school and play," he said.

At Pacific, Boras thrived, eventually becoming team captain. He blames a collision with a fellow-outfielder near the end of his college career, which marked the beginning of his knee problems, for the fact that he was never drafted, but in 1974 he was signed as an amateur free agent by the St. Louis Cardinals organization, receiving an eight-thousand-dollar bonus, which he used to pay for his continuing education. Over the next three years, Boras would leave school four weeks early and return four weeks late in order to play professional baseball, taking his final exams during spring training under the supervision of a pair of leathery coaches, Ken Boyer and Jack Krol. "I'd buy 'em two six-packs of beer and they would proctor my exams," he told me. "It was difficult, because you didn't want to be held out to be a college boy—that was not a good thing then. And so when I studied on the bus I'd cover up my neuropharmacology book in a men's magazine so that no one knew."

The business of baseball was changing, and, with the elimination, in 1976, of the reserve clause, which enforced a kind of indentured servitude, it was soon transformed. The average major-league player at the time made forty-six thousand dollars a year, or sixty per cent as much as the average pro hockey player, and the richest baseball player, Dick Allen, earned two hundred and twenty-five thousand. (Today, the league *minimum* is three hundred and eighty thousand, and the average is close to three million.) Minor leaguers, meanwhile, began at four hundred and fifty dollars a month. Boras, as he started out, held no particular convictions about labor law or just compensation—"When I played baseball, I always felt it was such a privilege," he says—but he seemed to have an innate sense of leverage. After he led the Class A St. Petersburg Cardinals in batting, he insisted that he be paid more than the next-highest hitter, on principle. And, once he finished his graduate studies, he renegotiated upward again. "I told them, 'I'm going to have to consider leaving, because I can go out in the real world and make ten times what I can make playing baseball.' "

He'd had a revelation, one spring morning, as he watched forty-five players react to being cut, all at once. "I saw, in the parking lot, wives crying, even players crying," he said. "I never expected that. I was blind to it when I came in. No one ever discloses to the players what's going to happen to ninety-nine per cent of them, because less than one per cent of the players are going to have a six-year major-league career. And maybe as many as only three or four per cent are going to have a three-year career. And so the answer is that this is not a career—this is a trapdoor."

The head of the Cardinals' farm system, Bob Kennedy, was a "true gentleman," Boras recalls, who seems to have recognized that Boras, even as his knees worsened, could prove valuable as a role model for less disciplined players. "Bob was one of the few guys in the baseball community who knew of my educational background," Boras says. "He would ask me to talk to players all the time, and make sure that we set an example on the teams I played for."



In 1977, Kennedy left to become the general manager of the Chicago Cubs, and shortly afterward he traded for Boras, who by that point was thinking of quitting. He told Kennedy that he was planning to go to law school, and Kennedy agreed to pay him for another year anyway. He was making about twelve hundred dollars a month. He didn't play a single game in 1978, because of his knees, but he used his earnings, once again, to help pay for school.

He went to McGeorge, the law school at Pacific, where Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy, then an appeals-court judge, taught constitutional law. (Boras, who says that he has never been able to write well, preferred remedies and tort reform.) While there, he sought out as an adviser a man by the name of Don Wollett, whose father had played minor-league baseball, and who specialized in labor law, serving as an arbitrator for the Teamsters in California. Wollett told Boras, "If you're good at what you do in the practice of law, ninety per cent of what is said about you will be negative."

Boras got his law degree in 1982, and took a job with the Chicago firm Rooks, Pitts & Poust, doing medical-malpractice work, in which he defended drug companies against class-action suits—arguably an even less popular job, in the public consciousness, than representing A-Rod. But baseball seemed to follow him even as he set about leaving it behind. During his job hunt, he had interviewed with a dozen different firms around the country, and had had a recurring experience. "I sat down, they looked at my résumé—I have twelve years of schooling—and what do they want to talk about?" he said. "Baseball." A few old teammates, meanwhile, had begun asking him for legal advice in their dealings with management.

In February of 1985, Boras helped the relief pitcher Bill Caudill sign a five-year contract with the Toronto Blue Jays. The deal, which gave Caudill seven million dollars, making him the second-wealthiest reliever in baseball, was struck just eight minutes before a scheduled salary-arbitration hearing, and established Boras's reputation for unflinching resolve. The next week, his picture appeared in *Sports Illustrated*. The partners of his firm called him in for a meeting: he'd have to choose between the drug companies and baseball. With the blessing of his wife, Jeanette (who, according to family lore, rebuffed his requests for a first date through six months of hard negotiating), he decided to hang out his own shingle. "I enjoyed working for people instead of big companies," he says. "It's like you're working for David against Goliath." The following year, Boras made *Sports Illustrated* again, this time for hiring an airplane pilot to fly over Toronto's Exhibition Stadium while towing a message for the Blue Jays' manager, Jimy Williams: "JIMY—GIVE CAUDILL THE BALL."

Today, the Boras Corporation, which is based in Newport Beach, California, employs about seventy-five people, and includes several subsidiaries: Boras Sports Marketing, the Boras Sports Training Institute, and a personal-management and consulting firm. Scouts stationed in Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, Japan, and across the United States identify and recruit potential clients. (Bill Caudill is one of these, based in Seattle.) "His practice is a long, never-ending troop surge," the veteran agent Tom Reich told me.

Boras represents sixty-five major-league players and about the same number of minor-league prospects, nearly all of whom he is apt to describe, at one time or another, as "special," "unique," "out of the box," "once in a decade," or, in the recent case of Alex Rodriguez, "IPN" (pronoun "eye-pin"), which is short for Iconic magnetism, historic Performance, and Network value. (Baseball insiders make sport of tracking Boras's latest terms of art.) He takes a five-per-cent commission on the salaries of his major-league clients, which this year total two hundred and ninety-five million dollars, and on the signing bonuses of his prospects (but not on their paltry minor-league wages). Even the larger agencies, like C.A.A., Octagon, and the Beverly Hills Sports Council, do not at the moment have stables of baseball clients with guaranteed future contracts in excess of a billion dollars, as Boras does. He vows that he will never sell out to a "Hollywood agency," despite having received offers that he says run to nine figures. "I've always wanted to be the best at something, and if you want to be the best at something I think you have to be very myopic at what you choose to pursue," he told me. Being the best agent means that Boras's current annual take-home, after expenses, is still far less than that of his veteran clients.

Boras is best known for his representation of Rodriguez—or, more specifically, for securing, in 2000, a ten-year, two-hundred-and-fifty-two-million-dollar deal for Rodriguez with the Texas Rangers, after which it emerged that the next-highest bidder had offered at least fifty million less. No baseball player, up to that point, had ever earned an annual salary of twenty million dollars, let alone twenty-five, and the sum of the contract was greater than what the Rangers' owner, Tom Hicks, had spent in buying the entire franchise from a group of investors led by George W. Bush in 1998. After just three years, Hicks and his advisers decided that he could no longer afford Rodriguez—so much so that they were willing to pay almost ten million dollars a year to the Yankees for the privilege of not having to pay the other fifteen million. The Texas signing became a case study at Harvard Business School. (Under the heading "Rodriguez and Revenue": "They believed that even after Rodriguez retired, his value and presence would still stay with the team.")

Boras told me that, in the fall of 2000, as he was preparing for Rodriguez's free agency, a producer from ESPN approached him about filming the negotiation process. "I looked at the producer and I go, 'Who in their right mind would ever *do* such a thing, to disclose the intimate negotiations between you, the people you deal with every day, the teams, and everything?' And he called me a day later and said, 'Oh, yeah, Jeff Moorad's going to do that.' I'm going, like, 'You found a pigeon that quickly?' I was taken aback that anyone, particularly a lawyer, would *ever* do that." Moorad, who is now the C.E.O. of the Arizona Diamondbacks, was then Boras's biggest rival in the representation business, and, according to Jerry Crasnick, in "License to Deal," a book about a year in the life of a self-loathing agent named Matt Sosnick, their competitiveness spilled over into the Newport Beach Little League. When Boras donated money to the program, and one of the local fields was renamed in his honor, Moorad bought the biggest outfield sign as an advertisement for his own firm. Moorad was also famous for throwing lavish All-Star Game parties, which Boras found distasteful and demeaning to the profession—just like the ESPN video segment, which showed Moorad fielding competing offers for the slugger Manny Ramirez and, eventually, settling on an eight-year, hundred-and-sixty-million-dollar deal, or the second-biggest contract in baseball history, after A-Rod's. "That is the most staged, nonsensical thing," Boras now says of the video. "Basically, the deal was done before the thing even started, so it was a hoax." (Moorad disputes this characterization: "Watch it yourself.")

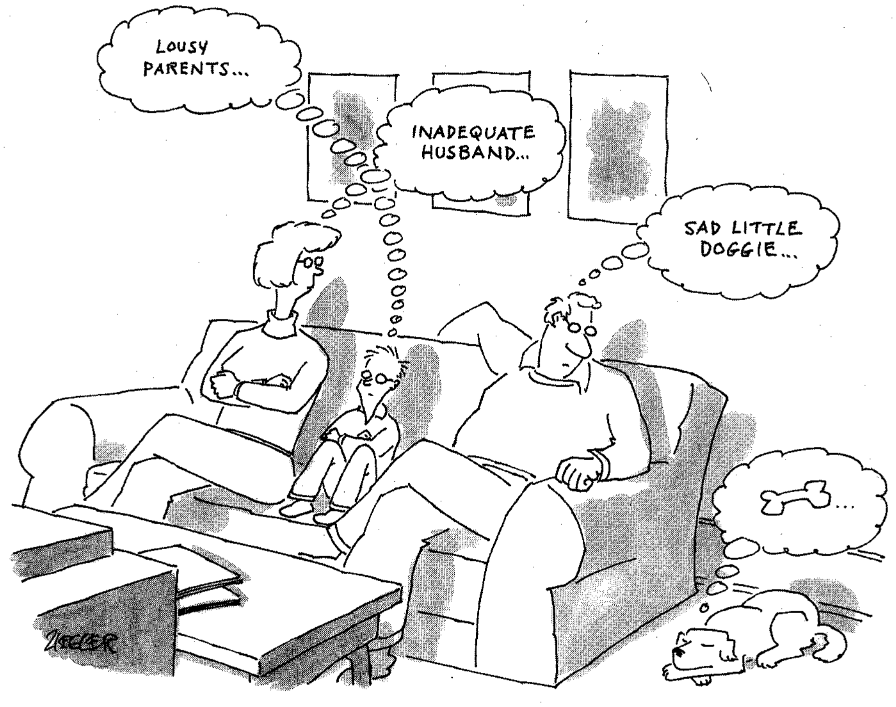
Agents benefit from what business-school types refer to as "information asymmetry," because they are in touch with multiple teams, who are, in turn, forbidden to communicate with one another. Controlling the flow of that information—between the teams, the media, and the players—is an essential component of the Boras methodology. "In terms of negotiation, this guy is an absolute special-forces guy," a competitor said of Boras. "The prison interrogations—he's one of those." Boras is a skilled manipulator of the media, and shows the kind of patience, as deadlines approach, that derives from great self-confidence. (This spring, he cut his negotiations with the Arizona Diamondbacks over the pitcher Max Scherzer so close to the wire that the A.P. reported, at 4:42 A.M., "Diamondbacks fail to sign No. 1 pick Scherzer," only to reverse course at 5:32 A.M., with a description of a four-year deal.) Boras is not, according to people familiar with his bargaining style, a yeller but, rather, a calm and even cartoonish condescender; in conversation, he comes across as someone who has never doubted his own dinner selection—although he would be happy to inform you of all the ways that you should doubt yours. Many of the veteran and more stubborn team executives are by now able to laugh him off ("Can you believe this arrogant prick?"), but it is not unheard of for younger officials to call around the league in need of being "talked down off the ledge," as one recipient of such a call told me. A club official once resorted to removing his shoe and banging it on the table ("like Nikita Khrushchev," Boras says), but no one has put a fist or a chair through a wall since the late nineties.

A cynic might suggest that Boras's refusal to discuss, let alone display, his negotiating tactics may be more than principled discretion. For one thing, it could be a cover for his reputed "phantom offers," such as the supposed six-year deal for Johnny Damon with which he reportedly tried to bait the Red Sox, in 2005. (When the Sox didn't bite, Damon signed with the Yankees, for only four years.) A bluffer stands to gain nothing by showing his cards. But Boras, who says, "I don't play cards," is generally dismissive of *all* so-called insider accounts of baseball business dealings, and he slammed Michael Lewis's best-selling "Moneyball," about Billy Beane, the general manager of the Oakland A's, for being "not quite as factual as we would like it to be." He also told me that he would like to write a book of his own—about the art of self-negotiation, as he calls it, or reorganizing one's priorities in order to reduce stress: "It just occurred to me that so much in America is focussed on time use of money, or money's growth over time, but the reality of it is—what no one's ever talked about—well, what if you lived twenty years longer?" He is looking for a ghostwriter with a background in geriatrics.

What Boras shows off, in lieu of poker skills, is his corporate headquarters—a sleek two-story building just off the Pacific Coast Highway, in the shadow of John Wayne Airport. The agency moved in a year ago, after investing fifteen million dollars in renovations and remodelling. Boras boasts that one of his clients told him the place feels like a locker room, but it resembles no locker room I have ever been in. Think of it as a spaceship that doubles as a museum. The exterior is all steel and glass, and the entrance is a giant windowless slab that's been dimpled with softball-size impressions. It has no knob or handle, and swings open slowly, as though you were about to enter a crypt. The first things you see after stepping inside are abstract-art installations: a swirl of mounted Louisville Sluggers hovering below the ceiling and, straight ahead, an enormous vertical grid of perhaps a thousand baseballs. The halls are lined with trophy cases and life-size action posters of Greg Maddux, Jason Varitek, and other clients. The internal rooms and offices have been outfitted with multi-panel television displays and baseball-diamond-themed keypads for changing the channels, which have been renamed in honor of the corporation: BCTV1, BCTV2, and so forth. Even the cubicles have plasma screens. ("I go to his new office—and they have all these TVs," Johnny Damon says.) One employee told me that the plan is eventually to have video highlights screening on an endless digital loop through the translucent walls; an electronic news ticker on the first floor has been customized to provide real-time updates on all of Boras's clients.

Instead of an ordinary conference room, Boras has a "war room," befitting his adversarial reputation, where the tables have been arranged in the shape of a giant V, facing a whiteboard. A panel outside the door identifies it as the Wollett Arbitration Room (W.A.R.), after Boras's mentor at McGeorge, who used to help with arbitration cases. Such cases were formerly a strong suit of the Boras Corporation and are now, increasingly, a weakness—a casualty, perhaps, of overreaching. Boras has lost twelve of his last fifteen cases, thanks in part to his aggressively high filings, and also to combative efforts on the part of Major League Baseball, which arms individual teams with neatly compiled records of all the arguments that Boras has used in the past, many of which are contradictory. (Another side effect of his aggressiveness is that teams often choose to settle rather than risk the high cost of such an arbitration defeat.)

A dozen or so researchers sit together on the second floor, at desks stocked with statistical volumes and books by the analyst Bill James. One of their main jobs is to underscore the uniqueness of Boras's upcoming free agents by producing three-ring binders full of Xeroxed spreadsheets and testimonials that can be mailed to potential suitors and the media. Boras calls these "treatises." When I mentioned the binders recently to a high-level baseball executive, he broke out laughing. "I think it's more to please the client," he said. "Like, 'Here's a copy for you and your family to put above the fireplace.' " The famous A-Rod binder of 2000, which was reportedly printed in an edition of a hundred, at a cost of thirty-five thousand dollars, featured quotes, in large type, comparing Rodriguez to Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci, and made reference to how "handsome" and "charming" he is. Johnny Damon, whose binder included ten chapters and predicted that he would end up playing more games than any


LOUSY PARENTS...
INADEQUATE HUSBAND...
SAD LITTLE DOGGIE...
...
ZIEGLER

"*A sizable gratuity always helps.*"

center fielder in history, says, "He made me feel like Ty Cobb."

The basement, which is sometimes called the foxhole or the dungeon, has showers and a laundry room, for those working late, plus an oxygen-sealed computer room that houses the firm's proprietary database—once a major selling point and now more of a stage prop, given the free availability of historical data on the Internet. Caterers bring in breakfast, lunch, and, when work demands, dinner, while a woman named Lilian Flores occasionally bakes sugar cookies in the kitchen for an afternoon snack. Staffers snack at their own risk, however, because Steve Odgers, a onetime strength coach with the Chicago White Sox, has prescribed diet plans and fitness regimens. Odgers runs the Sports Training Institute, which is housed offsite, on the campus of Soka University of America, about twenty minutes away. "It's part of our culture," Boras says. "Everybody works out." During arbitration hearings, which are usually held in Florida or Arizona, Boras and a handful of his top deputies have been known to assemble in the hotel gym wearing T-shirts that read "Team Boras."

Boras's own office is sparsely decorated. When we first spoke, his assistant brought him a mug of hot tea, and he took a seat at the end of a long table in the middle of the room, facing his desk, which was paperless. "We're purists about the game," Boras told me. "We're about commitment. We're about making you better." He brought up, as an example, Barry Zito, the San Francisco Giants' lefty who is known almost as much for his surfer persona as for his sweeping curveball. "What we did with Barry Zito a year and a half ago is one of my better pieces of work," he said. "It was really about getting him to be him. I call him Zicasso. The thing is, he wants to pitch powerfully, and I'm saying, 'No, you're Zicasso! You got to be the artist-poet-intellectual. That's what you're out there to do.' He feeds off it. 'You're Zicasso. You come out and you paint!' " He added a wavelike flourish with his arm to punctuate each new mention of Zicasso—whose performance in the past couple of years, incidentally, has not been discernibly better than it was before.

This theme echoed a commencement speech that Boras gave at McGeorge, in 2002, where he estimated that his job was thirty per cent negotiating and seventy per cent performance improvement—coaching and counselling, essentially. There he told a story about a client who walked into his office for the first time in 1999, seeking to negotiate what seemed likely to be the last contract of his career. "I pointed out to him that I thought he was someone who could actually do more than what he'd done in his great career," Boras said. "I could see his first thought was, Where's the door?" He went on, "In this particular case, my advice was that there was nothing more this player could do once the game began. But his psychological preparation prior to each game might warrant a new approach."

Boras retains a couple of psychologists, whose services are available to players free of charge—a perk that comes in handy when, say, their picture lands on the cover of the New York *Post* alongside a stripper from Las Vegas, such as occurred with Alex Rodriguez this year. (The *Post's* headline: "STRAY-ROD.") "We can find someone for them to talk to," Jeff Musselman, a former Boras client who is now a Boras Corporation vice-president, explained the week after. "I've known Alex since he was in high school. These are things we talked about when he was young. If you're going to be the best player in the league, these things are going to happen and you've got to know how to deal with them."

In the commencement lecture, however, Boras was talking about Barry Bonds, who, as everyone in the audience knew, had just broken the single-season home-run record, with seventy-three. "We truly gave counsel that resulted in the betterment of the client—not only in a contract sense but in a performance sense, in a *life* sense," he said. A year and a half later, the BALCO steroids scandal broke. Several months after that, Bonds switched agencies, and indicated in the San Francisco *Chronicle* that the split with Boras was not amicable. (Boras, in his office, said, "Philosophically, in areas that I can't talk about, we were on different pages.")

In "Game of Shadows," the authors Mark Fainaru-Wada and Lance Williams describe a couple of instances in which Bonds's strong will interfered with Boras's legal work. Bonds wanted to sit in on contract talks, and once even called the San Francisco Giants' owner, Peter Magowan, directly, for updates. At Boras's urging, Bonds was at the time training and sharing his home with the slugger Gary Sheffield, another Boras client—and another BALCO witness. Sheffield, like Bonds, is known for his independence of mind, and he eventually ditched Boras in favor of representing himself. Sheffield and Boras are now entangled in a union grievance over the commission on a contract that Sheffield believes Boras had nothing to do with. Boras's controlling style may be better suited for less self-assured stars, like A-Rod, or cheery, guileless players like Johnny Damon, who told me, of his relationship with Boras, "Scott for me was much like a psychologist this year. I was way into my head, and for the first time I had trouble with my legs. He makes you feel like you could play another ten years."

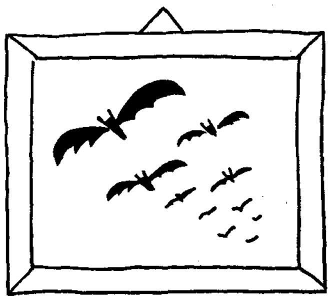
At one point while I was in his office, Boras took a phone call, and explained afterward, "The draft is looming." I asked if he planned to travel to Orlando, where the draft was being held. He smiled. "I think the draft is here," he said. "It's not in Orlando. We're in the room"—he pointed up, toward the war room—"and we're telling teams who they can draft, who they can't. That's basically how the thing goes."

Until this year, baseball's draft was merely a very long conference call, by the end of which more than one in every hundred eligible amateur players in the country had been selected—deceived into thinking that stardom was soon to follow. (The draft lasts fifty rounds, compared with seven in the N.F.L. and two in the N.B.A.) It was instituted in 1965, and remained largely unaffected by the steady advances of the Players Association over the next two decades. (Union membership is restricted to major-league players, who have consistently made concessions on the amateur end in exchange for increased freedom for veterans.) Boras first got involved in 1983, while still moonlighting as a baseball counsellor in the employ of Rooks, Pitts & Poust. That summer, he approached a tall pitcher named Tim Belcher, who had just finished his junior year at Mount Vernon Nazarene College, in Ohio, and had been selected No. 1 over all by the Minnesota Twins. College juniors were seen as highly exploitable, because of the quirks of N.C.A.A. eligibility rules. They had no bargaining leverage. The Twins initially offered Belcher eighty thousand dollars to sign, which was twenty thousand dollars less than Rick Monday had received in 1965, as the first pick in the first draft.

Boras noticed that Mount Vernon Nazarene was not in fact a member of the N.C.A.A., and belonged instead to a much smaller organization, the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics, whose rules on eligibility were slightly different. He advised Belcher to plan to return to Ohio.

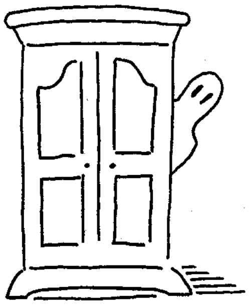
"The scouting director for the Twins was a very abrupt man," Boras recalled in his office, referring to George Brophy, who died a few years ago. "He went public, saying, 'It's disgusting that these kids are being represented. They're draft picks.' All these antiquated thought processes. I kept on saying, 'He's a young man in a negotiation against a system, which requires him to sign a professional sports contract, which is governed by a collective-bargaining agreement. Why wouldn't he need a lawyer?' I said, 'Why do your teams have lawyers who draft all these things up? You've unilaterally imposed all these rules.' He sat there, looked at me, and goes, 'I'm not a lawyer. I'm just talking to you about baseball. That's not how we do things.' I said, 'Well, we're changing. We're changing for the betterment of the game. The great athletes aren't going to come to baseball if you keep the bonuses at this level, because some owner *will* pay for that talent. It just happens to be in a different sport. Baseball players play football and basketball, too.' "

Boras contends that higher signing bonuses in those sports, where the college game is itself nearly professional, and where there is no illusion that prospective draftees are anything other than commodities, are partly to blame for the decline in African-American baseball players. (Blacks now account for only eight per cent of major leaguers, down from more than twenty-five per cent when Boras was still playing.) Belcher, however, was strictly a baseball player, and white. Brophy initially alleged that he had sacrificed his amateur status by hiring an agent; Boras countered that he was merely a legal adviser, and had signed no formal agreement. Belcher held out, returned to school, and reëntered the supplemental draft the next January, where he was taken by the Yankees. They paid him a hundred and twenty thousand dollars.



Repeat performances such as this in the intervening years have earned Boras the nickname Lord of the Loophole, and a number of teams, as a means of fighting back, have taken to automatically bypassing players affiliated with Boras. The league introduced "slot recommendations," a form of price-fixing in which signing bonuses are preset, according to draft position, by the commissioner's office, and owners wishing to pay out of lockstep must now justify their profligate intentions in writing. Fledgling agents, meanwhile, capitalize by using Boras's reputation as a recruiting tool—"Sign with me, and the teams won't punish you to get back at Scott."

As Boras was recounting this history for me in his characteristically didactic fashion, a man dressed in jeans and an untucked striped shirt walked by his office window. "That's Kurt Stillwell, by the way," Boras said. Stillwell was the second over-all pick in that 1983 draft, after Belcher. He now works as a scout for Boras, based outside San Diego, and he had come to Newport to help man the phones for the 2007 draft, in which Boras was representing—or, rather, legally advising—seven of *Baseball America's* twenty top-rated prospects. ("He's like Wilt Chamberlain when he decided to pass more, and he led the league in assists," a rival agent complained. "He decides to focus on the draft, and he gets fifteen of the thirty first-round picks.") Later that afternoon, as I was heading to my car in the parking lot, I saw Stillwell and Boras and a couple of other retired major leaguers on the Boras Corporation masthead, Mike Fiore and Scott Chiamparino. They were all heading to Anaheim for the Angels-Twins game. Outside the office, among his fellow ex-ballplayers, Boras begins to shed his lawyerly guise and recover the jocular, teasing air of his playing days, and so there they were, Stilly and Scott and Champ and Fi, arguing over who was going to ride in whose Jeep or Range Rover. To some, this aspect of Boras's personality is transparently vicarious. "He likes to use the fact that he played ball," one rival says. "He played *wiffle* ball. I mean, he was in an organization, but he was no major-league player."



The inaugural draft telecast, when it aired on ESPN2, a couple of days later, left no doubt about who is in control of the narrative. The word "signability"—code, basically, for the odds that a Boras client will return to school or take a sabbatical in an independent league—was repeated again and again by the hosts, who also interviewed the Hall of Famer Dave Winfield, a former three-sport athlete. Winfield said that if he were starting out today he might have to consider choosing another game. (Among other things, full college scholarships are relatively rare in baseball these days.) There was even a segment devoted to the "Boras Effect," in which a couple of analysts explained his practice of simply stating a player's worth in advance and warning teams not to draft him unless they planned to pay it. As a result, the Boras advisee Andrew Brackman, one of the top-rated pitchers, and a star basketball player as well ("two-sportability," for those watching the telecast), fell to the deep-pocketed Yankees, with the thirtieth pick. They then gave him a signing bonus that was nearly a million dollars greater than the bonus given to the fourth over-all pick, the pitcher Daniel Moskos, by the resource-poor Pittsburgh Pirates. Kentrail Davis, an outfielder whom Boras had valued at "low-first-round money," or about what the slot recommendation would have been for Brackman, was not chosen until the fourteenth round. Boras advised him to go to college instead.

One agent, who told me that he has instructed his staff to refer to Boras as "he who shall not be named," then requested that his own name not be identified, for fear of recrimination from the union. "Gene Orza is a figurehead," he said, referring to the chief operating officer of the Players Association. "Scott Boras *is* the union."

Some of this paranoia is a function of the general ruthlessness and lawlessness of the industry, where the certification process is more or less perfunctory, and there is very little oversight. "As fiduciary systems go, it's as bad as it gets," an agent told me, and recommended that I look up the columns of the *Daily News* writer Bill Madden, who habitually refers to Boras as the "avenging agent." The Madden fan added that Boras "stands for everything in the industry that's gone to hell," and, on being asked to elaborate, said, "It's who he is, *what* he is, what his *attitude* is—it's the kind of *bastard* he is."

Matt Sosnick, in Jerry Crasnick's book, accuses Boras of stealing a client of his, Jesse Foppert. When I asked Boras about the book, he said, "There's this kid named Sosnick in it—some young kid who procures high-school players." Sosnick is thirty-eight. "This book is written on the trials and tribulations of him saying, 'I don't know what I'm doing. I'm so proud of myself. I can get kids at eighteen to sign with me.' And he's still in business!"

Staying in business for too long can begin to wear on one's conscience or nag at one's pride—the indignity of being a valet. Boras's earliest rival was an agent named Dennis (Go Go) Gilbert, another former minor leaguer, who got his start selling life insurance, door to door, in Hollywood. (Before he began representing ballplayers like George Brett and Jose Canseco, his clients included Michael Landon, Sally Field, and Rod Stewart.) He once drove a Rolls-Royce with "GOGO19" plates—a reference to his uniform number—but in 1999, after nearly twenty years as an agent, he quit the business, dedicated himself to the charity Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities (R.B.I.), and eventually resurfaced on the other side of the picket line, as a special assistant to Jerry Reinsdorf, the owner of the Chicago White Sox. "You have to understand, some people are in love with the game," he told me, unapologetic about having switched allegiances. "You're always going to find the White Sox have treated their players extremely well. We don't overpay our players." The White Sox have historically tended to avoid doing business with Scott Boras. Gilbert also pointed out that Joe Crede, a Boras client on Chicago's roster, spent most of this season on the disabled list.

Gilbert's management turn was followed, in 2004, by Jeff Moorad's with the Arizona Diamondbacks, but both of them were really taking a worn trail of agent misgiving blazed by Jerry Kapstein, one of the pioneers of the trade, who in the early days of free agency represented stars like Carlton Fisk and Don Baylor and Fred Lynn, and was later decertified by the union after falling into bed with management: he married the daughter of Joan Kroc, the San Diego Padres' owner. Kapstein then divorced, found God, began working with the homeless, and reëntered baseball as a senior adviser with the Red Sox. Today, he goes by Jeremy.

Boras's yearnings do not extend in that direction ("I will never work for a team," he says), though at times he seems to be trying to steer the ship from the shore, with ideas like the expanded World Series and, as he later explained to me, looking fifteen years down the line, a Pacific Rim Division, including teams in Seoul, Beijing, and Tokyo. "The footprint of baseball is already there," he said. "I think the economics of the game will force us to strongly consider it." A few months ago, he even called for the invention of a new statistic, the exceptional play, or E.P.—a way of rewarding "defensive acumen" that might also be useful in, say, bolstering the bargaining position of a free-agent star like Andruw Jones, who has suddenly lost his stroke at the plate.

Another, perhaps worthier plan of his, for which he hopes to enlist the support of Bill Gates, is to start a foundation—the paperwork has already been filed—dedicated to doubling the salaries of teachers, through a voucher-based system laden with incentives that would piggyback on existing contracts, like a public-private partnership. He says he doesn't wish to supplant the teachers' union; he'd merely bypass it, as he has done with the Players Association and the baseball draft. "I just think a lot of great minds that have gone into the teaching profession are leaving," he says.

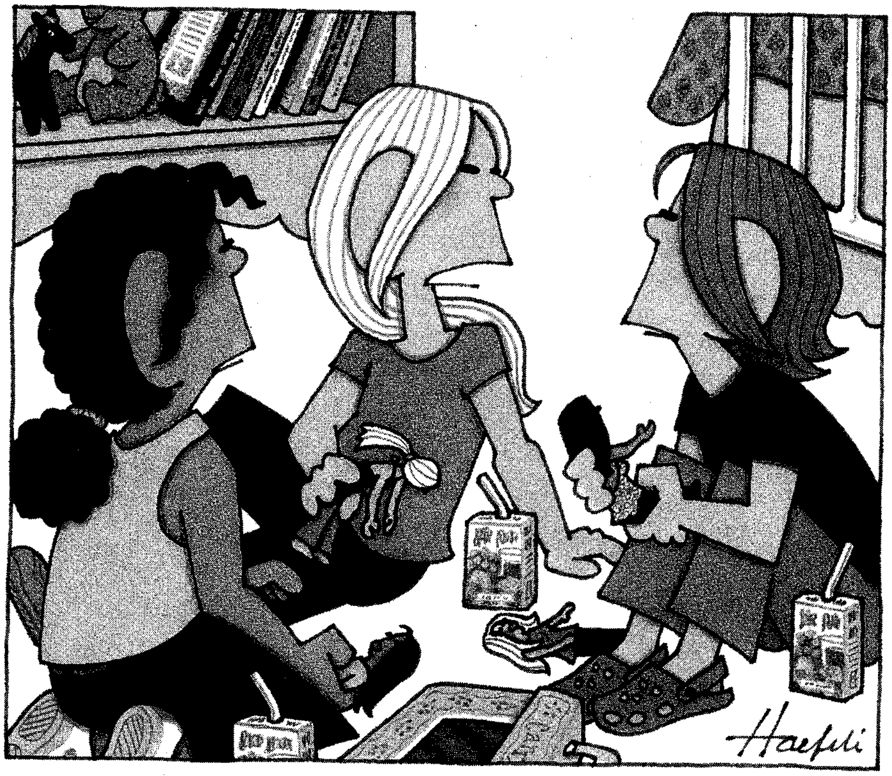
Boras says that his aim is to observe every team, including those on the East Coast, play at least nine games a year, which means that he must spend a great deal of time at the ballpark. He has a daughter, who is in college, and two high-school-age sons, both of whom play baseball. His house in Newport, which is set on a ridge overlooking the ocean, has a batting cage in the garage. "I don't ever get bored with the game," he told me. "I haven't reached that point yet." He then described his ideal day: lunch with a client, followed by watching his sons play baseball in the afternoon, and a trip to Angel or Dodger Stadium at night. (He and Jeanette share quality time at the gym each morning.) There are costs associated with such single-minded success. Boras says that he is an art and architecture lover, and he has paintings by Miró and Chagall to prove it, but he has never been to Europe. He referred to a recent four-day fishing trip with his family, during which he became violently seasick, as "a failed attempt at a vacation."

The fishing trip came shortly before the All-Star break, which serves as a sort of annual convention for agents, with thirty teams' worth of beat reporters swarming and all of the world's best players—beware of client poachers—assembled in one place. This year's game was held in San Francisco, and the city gave itself over to baseball, with free trolleys shuttling visitors between "FanFest" and the ballpark, and plenty of elaborate parties, including the union's annual bash. The actor Robert Wuhl, who starred in "Arli$$," the HBO show about a sports agent, showed up at the union event. ("That fucking Robert Wuhl," Boras says. "I like him. But he had a show where he slept with his client's wife. He's asked me to go on that show. I said, 'I will never go on that show.' I said, 'I hate that show.' ") Boras skipped all the parties, and in this respect, at least, he resembled Matt Sosnick, who told me, "I have enough trouble liking myself, let alone other agents."

On the day of the game, I met Boras at A.T.&T. Park, around two o'clock, in his customary spot behind home plate, where he'd been holding court since 11 A.M. He was wearing jeans and a blazer, with a checked pink shirt, and shades. We retreated twenty or so rows, to a pair of seats shielded from the sun, where people no longer seemed to recognize that they were in the company of baseball's preëminent power broker, who had recently begun floating a couple of related ideas: (1) that Alex Rodriguez, who was having a career year, might not wish to play out the remainder of his contract, which calls for three more years in New York; and (2) that the industry was ready to support thirty-million-dollar salaries.

Team Boras was well represented on the field, if not by its own high standards. "Last year, we had eight," Boras said. "This year, I think we only have six." (Those six included the batting leader and the home-run leader in each league.) He was still trying to sell his World Series idea, which the commissioner finally acknowledged during a town-hall chat with fans that afternoon. ("I know Scott Boras has made that suggestion," Selig said. "I'm satisfied, quite frankly, that seven games—the system is working.")

The previous day's feature, the Home Run Derby, had been, to my mind, a tedious affair, so thoroughly dominated by commercial breaks and sideshows—Counting Crows performed in center field—that you could have confused its ostensible action for the batting practice we were now watching: sporadic bursts of long fly balls amid a scene of milling around. Boras saw the problem differently: the derby suffered from a lack of funding. "You know, the home-run-hitting contest shouldn't be at the All-Star Game," he said. "It should be at the end of the year. Players wouldn't be worried about messing up their swings. A lot of them don't care to participate, because there's



"I have my mother's vindictive nature and my father's garnisheed wages."

"You don't keep an orgasm diary, do you? My last girlfriend kept an orgasm diary."

• •

no *incentive* to do it, and in the middle of the season they care about their teams. But at the end they're going to be fighting for something. And it'll probably be corporately sponsored—there'll be a check there for them, to really make this where players will be *playing* for something, like pro golf." He added that he could envision a complementary exhibition, a skills competition for throwing and fielding, along the lines of basketball's slam-dunk contest, but when, playing along, I suggested a base-stealing event, he balked. The players might hurt their legs.

Boras sounded hoarse, on account of a tour-de-force performance at "media day," the previous morning, where he and a phalanx of five broad-shouldered associates held court for five hours in the lobby of the Westin St. Francis. Boras has said that he operates "in the arena of truth," and, though he didn't mean it as a form of self-criticism, the spacious confines of the metaphor seem apt. He has a way of bending and extending his facts into the outer reaches of plausibility. When I asked him how many staffers he'd brought with him to the All-Star Game, he said, "We have as many as ten people here." Shortly thereafter, he said, "So we have about fifteen to twenty people here." This followed a pattern he had established earlier, in Newport Beach, when enumerating the various departments and employees of the Boras Corporation, whose ranks swelled gradually from around seventy to more than a hundred. Critics of Boras call him a "compulsive liar," or a "congenital liar," while also granting that he, at least, seems to believe what he says. I prefer to think of it primarily as optimistic, adversarial embellishment, and, in the interest of illustrating that optimism, I will return to the subject of Barry Zito, whose début season with the Giants was not turning out to be worthy of the record-breaking money that enticed him to leave Oakland, and whose cerebral nature Boras was now attributing to his slow adjustment, implying that Zicasso would simply need more time.

Don Wollett, for whom the Boras war room was named, is now eighty-eight, and lives for much of the year on an island in Washington State, near the Canadian border, but last fall, before Zito's move, he made it down to Oakland to watch a game with Boras and Zito's father. "It was my only experience in a luxury box," he told me recently. "I was very uncomfortable. I thought of my days in law school at the University of Chicago—the old Comiskey Park, in the bandbox bleachers. That felt more like real baseball." Without criticizing Boras, he told me he was concerned about the game—about "the gross inequality in distribution of income" and "compensation unrelated to performance."

Later, he sent me excerpts from a memoir he'd been working on. One passage read, "Baseball is a team game, not merely a collection of highly skilled personnel, some making a lot more money than others. And it is the performance of the team that governs success or failure. A sensible compensation system must reflect that fact. Paul Weiler, the Harvard labor-law professor, is correct when he argues that unrestrained free agency is not the best possible regime for professional baseball." Another said, "I look at the Alex Rodriguez deal with the Texas Rangers and say to myself: 'That's great for you, Alex, Godspeed.' But does this system make sense for our national pastime, in which, we like to think, performance is rewarded? It's what you deserve, not what you can get, that counts."

Ron Shapiro, a longtime baseball agent of a different stripe from Boras (he is the author of "The Power of Nice: How to Negotiate So Everyone Wins—Especially You!"), echoed Wollett's sentiment this summer when he said that he believes his clients Cal Ripken, Jr., and Kirby Puckett benefitted, if not on the balance sheet, from forming lasting attachments with their respective teams and communities in Baltimore and Minnesota, where they played their entire careers. He brought up Alex Rodriguez by comparison. "I think that Alex still seems to be searching for something that lies beyond the pot of gold," he said. "There's something disquieting about his quest for acceptance." This was before Cynthia Rodriguez, Alex's wife, showed up at Yankee Stadium wearing a tight-fitting tank top with the words "Fuck You"—so much for lasting community attachments—printed on the back in gothic script. (The *Post:* "F-ROD.") And then the Yankees, with their two-hundred-million-dollar payroll, flamed out in the first round of the playoffs for the third straight year, with Rodriguez doing nothing to shake his tabloid image as a world-beating choke artist.

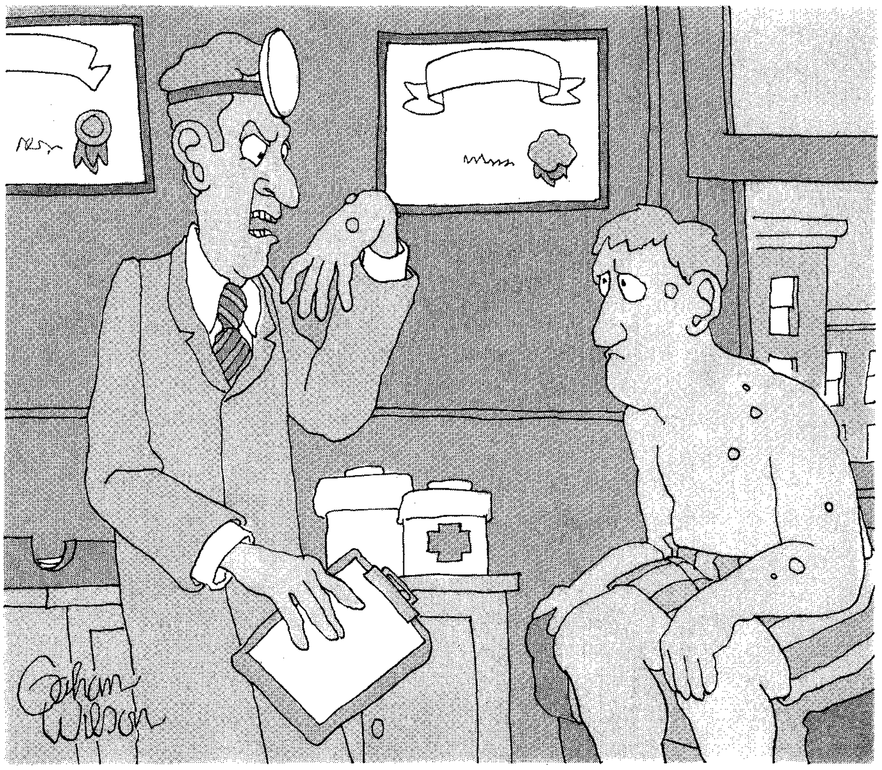
The conventional wisdom in baseball circles, as the regular season neared its end, had been that Boras would dangle the threat of free agency to force the Yankees into a long-term contract extension for Rodriguez. Tom Hicks, the Texas owner, is still on the hook for about a quarter of the eighty-one million dollars the Yankees owe Rodriguez over the next three years, which means that he effectively costs them no more than Derek Jeter. (Few people recognize Boras's responsibility, incidentally, for goading Rodriguez into making the taunting remarks in an old *Esquire* interview—"You don't say, 'Don't let Derek beat you.' He's never your concern"—that set his Yankee tenure on an uneasy path from the start.) Brian Cashman, the Yankees' general manger, said that he would not participate in an open bidding session should Rodriguez opt out, thereby annulling the Texas subsidy, and Boras is technically—"academically" and "theoretically" are the words he likes to use—forbidden to have discussions with other teams in the meantime, under the rules governing tampering.

But Boras is by nature a divorce lawyer, not a family mediator, which is why the Cubs rumor, as reported last month by *New York*, seemed so ingenious: Boras was supposedly in talks about a deal—a technically prohibited deal, as it turns out—that would have given Rodriguez a deferred ownership stake in the team, with civilians who also happened to be *prospective* owners of the Cubs, who are for sale. ("If it was true, that would be grounds to disqualify someone from becoming an owner before even filing the application," the Yankees' president, Randy Levine, protested.) "Great players with great demand create great rumors," Boras said, in denying the account. But so do great agents, and Boras, using what the Atlanta Braves' president, John Schuerholz, calls "voodoo economics," has begun citing television ratings trends and revenue forecasts to suggest that Rodriguez is worth as much as eighty million dollars in annual cash flow, and therefore affordable to even the smallest of markets. ("When he presented us with that kind of offer with Andruw Jones, we found it so ridiculous and obnoxious we didn't even respond," Schuerholz said on ESPN Radio.) Boras compares Rodriguez to Wayne Gretzky ("Gretzky was an IPN player"), who, in 1988, halfway through a record-shattering hockey career, was sent from Edmonton to Los Angeles in an innovative deal that involved contributions from the concessionaires and the local cable network.

The deadline for declaring Rodriguez a free agent is ten days after the final game of the World Series. Last week, as the showdown began in earnest, Boras's opt-out drama became caught up in a much grander, almost Shakespearean drama in Tampa, where the heirs of the doddering patriarch George Steinbrenner gathered, like Lear's, to assert control of his kingdom. (The family's first decision was to make Joe Torre an offer he could only refuse.)

Amid such distraction, Alex and Cynthia Rodriguez, after reportedly looking at a forty-million-dollar town house off Fifth Avenue ("STAY-ROD?"), were able to slip away for a family retreat of their own, under the protective custody of the Borases, in Newport Beach, while Boras's research team put the finishing touches on a new, updated free-agent binder. The binder will include a section showing the poor post-season performances of such Hall of Famers as Willie Mays, Mickey Mantle, Joe DiMaggio, Yogi Berra, and Ted Williams. "Even Reggie Jackson, Mr. October, had four bad playoff series," Boras told me.

"Academically, and *theoretically*, they could make an offer," Boras said as the Steinbrenner claimants prepared to hash out the Yankees' future. Then, speaking of Rodriguez, he switched to the past tense: "He enjoyed playing in New York." ♦



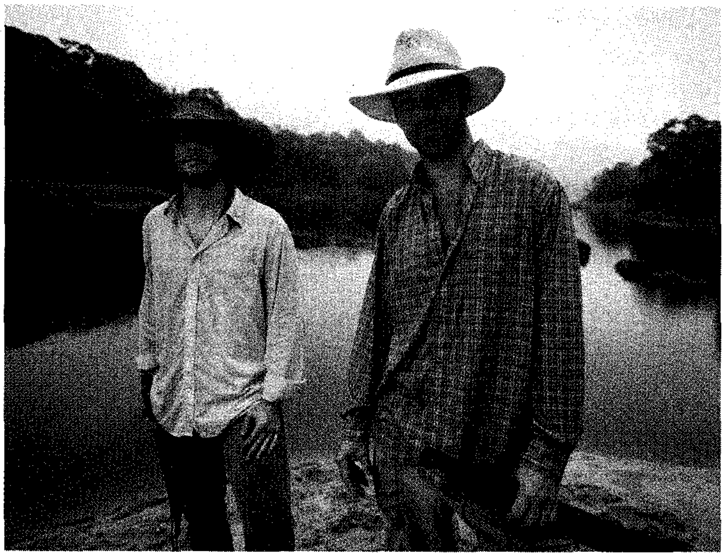
"Look—now I've gone and caught your stupid disease!"

NOTES OF A GASTRONOME

EXTREME CHOCOLATE

The quest for the perfect bean.

BY BILL BUFORD



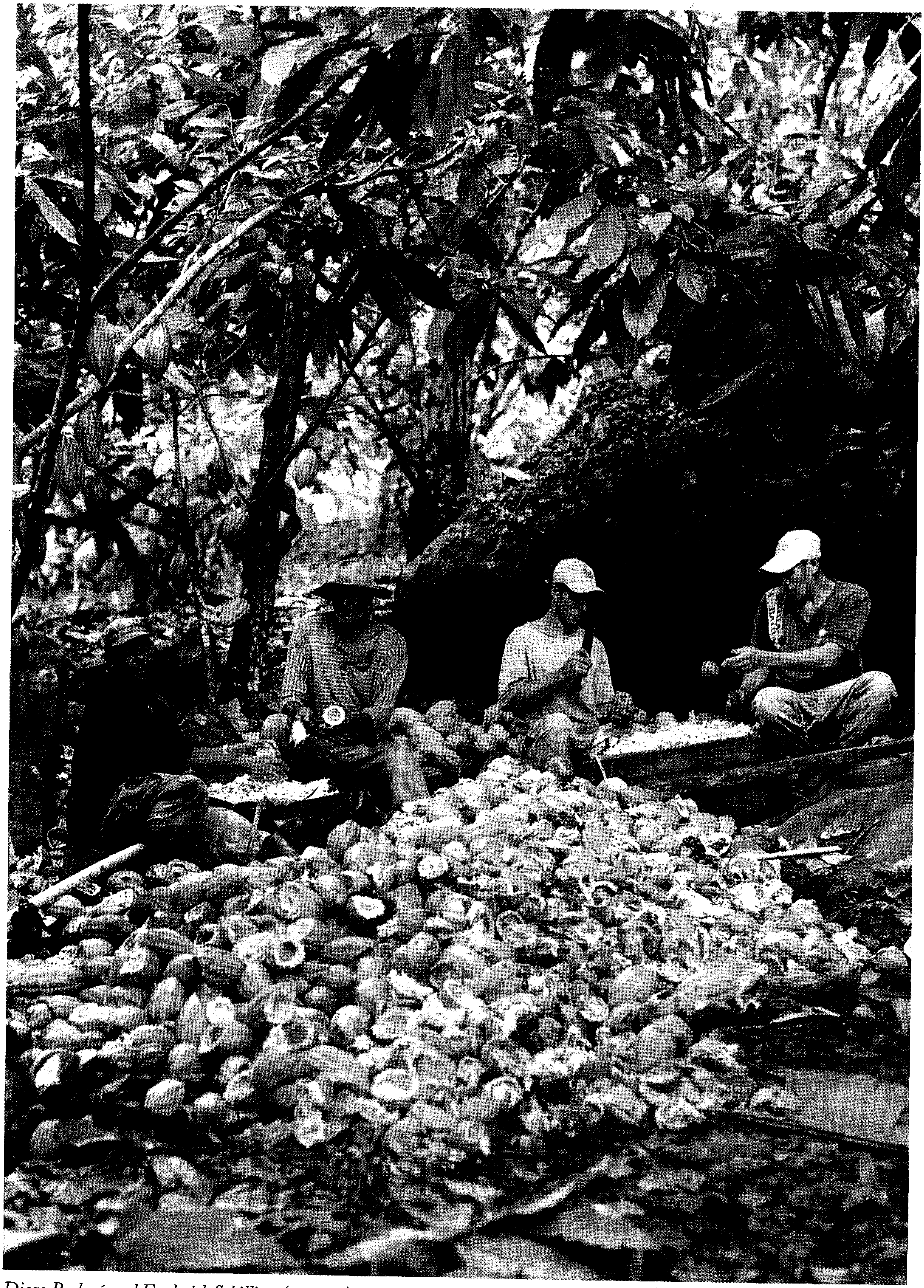
On July 7, 2001, Frederick Schilling and his girlfriend, Tracey Holderman, arrived in New York to attend the Fancy Food Show and launch Dagoba, an organic-chocolate company. Schilling had just turned thirty, Holderman was twenty-nine, and the show was the first entrepreneurial event of their lives. Dagoba had no employees and no orders. It had a lease for a ground-floor industrial space in Boulder, Colorado (the "factory"), and an investment of twenty thousand dollars (borrowed from Schilling's mother and an uncle), which, after flights, a hotel, and a fee for the smallest possible booth, against a dark wall in the basement of the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, was gone. It also had "launch products"—seven bars, including infusions of raspberry and mint—an amateurish jamboree, confected and poured into molds by a man who had never liked chocolate, hand-wrapped by a woman who rarely ate more than two ounces a year, and tested only by their Boulder friends and roommates, a scraggly crew of ski bums and folksingers. Dagoba was more bedroom than boardroom. In New York, that changed.

"I was overwhelmed," Holderman told me. "The magnitude of the show, the number of other chocolate companies—I had no idea." Their venture had begun a few months earlier, on Valentine's Day. Holderman and Schilling were on a chairlift, skiing in the Arapahoe Basin, when Schilling said he could wait no longer ("I need to do this now!"). He raced down, shopped, got home, melted two batches of organic chocolate, infusing one with milk chai, the other with raspberries and rose hips, poured them into heart-shaped molds, and served them on a silver platter to the hundred friends who came over for a party that went on till the next morning, with guests naked in a hot tub, "praying for peace," as a red sun brightened the Continental Divide.

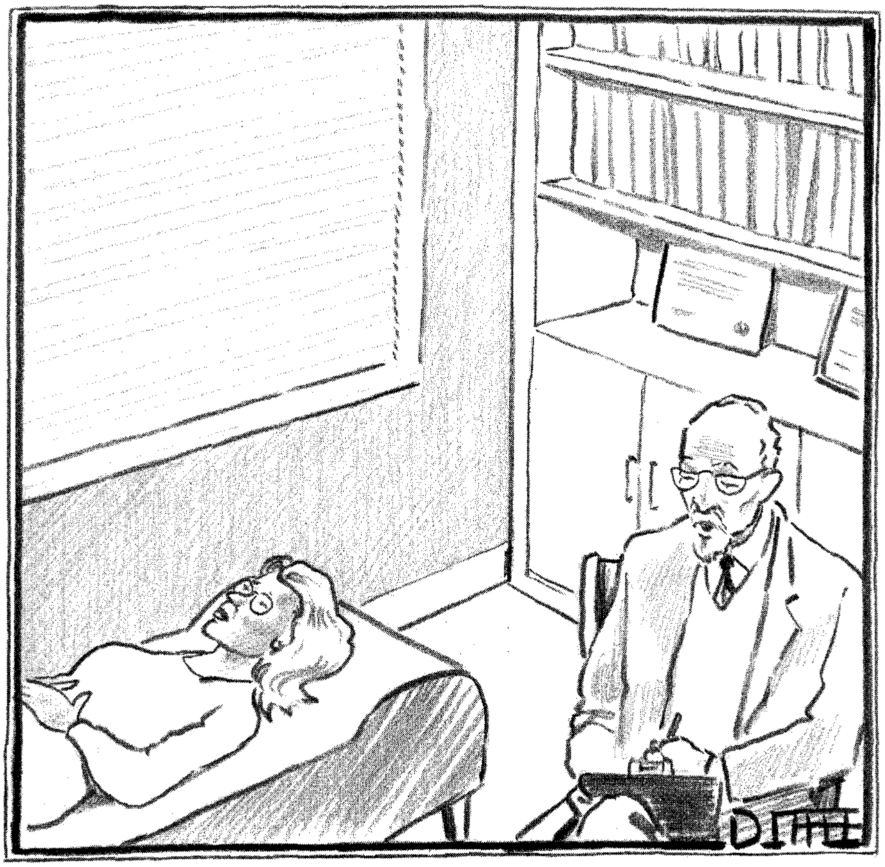
The Fancy Food Show runs for three days. By the end, Holderman and Schilling's samples had disappeared in a bewildering thirty-six-hour gobblefest, their picture taken so often that they felt like celebrities—the boyfriend-girlfriend team with wacky organics—and Schilling, a self-described alchemist, entered the happiest period of his life. He became a chocolate-maker.

I found Schilling at this year's show slumped uncomfortably in a plastic chair. His face was in a cup of coffee, absorbing steam. He was wearing an oversized floppy cotton shirt, the top buttons undone, a hairy chest on display, jeans, clogs, a discolored shiny leather bracelet. He was wolverine thin, with an unshaven scratchy face, sagging cheeks, and soft round sacks under his eyes, and his breath smelled so powerfully of red wine from the night before that a staff member gave him two sticks of cinnamon gum. He had just returned from a trip to Bali, Java, and Sulawesi, including a stint in the tropical backcountry, and he kept running a hand through his hair, as if to make sure that a soft-tissue creature hadn't made a home there. He wasn't on a New York clock yet, he explained, but realized, counting slowly, that he'd been here five days. He looked up, perplexed, his eyes so red they could have been rubbed with sand.

Schilling is thirty-six, no longer a novice but still not the obvious founder of a manufacturing company with many millions of dollars in sales. His education has been scattershot. He applied to one college, St. John's in New Mexico, didn't get in, prepared to enter a monastery, and, at the last minute, was offered a scholarship by Ohio Wesleyan to play lacrosse. ("I love lacrosse!") He intended to study religion, hoping to satisfy a spiritual need, but, in the summer, attended a music



Diego Badaró and Frederick Schilling (opposite). Cutting cacao pods on Badaró's farm, in Bahia. Photographs by Jason Florio.



"You may be suffering from what's known as full-nest syndrome."

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festival "in the sacred valley of Telluride" and never returned. He worked for a record store, the sum of his business experience. He played guitar. He wrote songs, smoked "an insane amount of herbal blends," and was the lead singer in a band. After six years, he moved to Boulder, but, fundamentally, his life never changed.

At the show, Schilling and I walked past the French chocolates of Michel Cluizel and saw a photograph of the white-haired patriarch surrounded by his offspring: four scrawny young adults, each assigned to a different division of the business. Dagoba is an inverted version. Schilling has no children, but his mother, a soft-spoken sixty-one-year-old divorcée, looks after the front office. She was running the stand that morning. An older sister, unmarried, keeps the books. And his father, a misanthropic ex-I.B.M. corporate manager, retired at forty-nine ("So I could golf, drink beer, bowl, and play blackjack at Indian casinos," he told me), was summoned one weekend to give lessons in how to run a business and stayed for years. "How do I travel so much?" Schilling said. "I've got Papa Jon nearby, Sister Becky doing the accounts, and Mother Mary working the phones." He beamed. His smile was disarming because it was so trusting, confident that the affection it conveyed would be reciprocated, and his manner, despite the hangover and the slouch and the exhaustion, was irrepressibly cheerful. "*Theobroma cacao*," he exhaled—the scientific name given to chocolate by Linnaeus—stretching out his arms as though to embrace his products in a loving hug. "*Theos*, god. *Broma*, food. The food of the gods."

In the past five years, dark chocolate has had astonishing sales, especially in the United States, and has grown ten times faster than milk chocolate. In 2006, its sales increased by fifteen per cent. Dark chocolate represents a quarter of what Americans buy, four billion dollars last year, and industry analysts, who believe that sales will reach nearly five and a half billion by 2011, don't see an end. One says that it "will drive the chocolate sector for the next hundred years." An appreciation of dark chocolate is now a sign of a discriminating palate. Most chocolate has no such pretensions. It ends up in a candy bar or a chocolate Easter egg or an M&M-like treat referred to by the trade as "bagged product." But taste is a powerful force—in effect, "taste" is "culture"—which I hadn't fully understood until Schilling introduced me to his high-end hands-on fellow-manufacturers.

They were uniformly earnest. They told no jokes. They seemed to have no interest in selling, wanting to talk only about what they made, bars invariably (anything else—a filled confection like a truffle, for instance—was frivolous), in the compulsive, insistent way that upmarket vintners go on about their wines. The intellectual index was the wrapper, the compact culinary encyclopedia of what was inside. It might tell you where the beans came from. (Madagascar is this year's hot real estate.) It might reveal the varietal. One of the rarest is a Porcelana, from South America; Amedei, an Italian company, sells it for a hundred and twenty-seven dollars a pound. There were "crus," named after specific farms. Some bars had a harvest year. I got one from an Internet supplier, a 2002, made from Chuao Valley beans in Venezuela, three years past its sell-by date. Suspecting a gimmick, I ate it to confirm its staleness. I was surprised. It seemed fresher than other bars I'd bought. If kept dry, a chocolate with a high cacao content, I've discovered, rarely spoils.

The cacao content is a wrapper's most important datum, and the acceptable benchmark is seventy per cent. The figure is a measure of "cocoa mass." (The English language uses "cacao," the Mayan word for the tree, and "cocoa," an eighteenth-century corruption, interchangeably.) The mass is what you get after you grind up the beans, a gooey wet gob. I did this at home. I put old, dry beans in a coffee grinder, and was surprised by the amount of liquid they produced. It is fat, a lot of it, half the bean's content, although the fat is mainly unsaturated, the kind that's good for you, like an avocado's. This benchmark figure is now the heart of contemporary dark-chocolate culture. It provides a confederation of obsessives with a name, "the seventy-per-cent club" (pure chocolate, "no bonbons")—the snobbiest of the snobby, according to Schilling. It is the number on most of the chocolates I saw. Amedei's Porcelana is seventy per cent. So is an Ocumare Grand Cru, an award-winning new product, named after a Venezuelan valley unknown to anyone except other fanatics.

I tasted it with Schilling. His face gave little away. "Good chocolate," he said finally.

I had a bite and thought: Harmonic, pure.

"Expensive beans," he added, quietly. "But good." He had another bite. "In fact," he declared, "this is very good." It was too emphatic. I wondered if he had a reservation he wasn't expressing, maybe out of respect to the maker, Art Pollard. In 1996, Pollard had a midlife cacao epiphany and has been on a quest for perfect chocolate ever since. This was one of his three products. It might be years before he produced another. I studied him: pale skin, soft middle, a wife he never sees, talking, talking, talking. His life was this bar.

Schilling took me to the Valrhona stand, the French maker, and we tasted a Guanaja, named after a Caribbean island where chocolate was first seen by a European. Columbus, on his last voyage, in 1502, came upon a dugout canoe filled with brown beans, clearly regarded by their Mayan crew as precious: everyone panicked when some spilled. But Columbus, eager to get on, dismissed them as strange almonds. Valrhona's Guanaja was the world's first seventy-per-cent bar, the chocolate world's equivalent of an airplane's breaking the sound barrier. It was released in 1986, after two years of secret testing by pastry chefs and tastings and retastings by a Valrhona jury. Before the Guanaja, most dark chocolate was half sugar, a so-called bittersweet confection.

Since then, Valrhona has followed the same studied approach in launching any new bar. It was founded in 1924 and has ten basic bars. El Rey, founded in 1929, has nine bars. Scharffen Berger has six. The message: serious chocolate is a considered business.

Schilling has twenty-nine bars. He has his dark bars, like everyone else—a New Moon (seventy-four per cent), a darker moon (the Eclipse, eighty-seven per cent), and the hundred-per-cent Prima Materia, the refined version of what I produced with my coffee grinder, a brick of intensely complex flavors that can be eaten only in small quantities over a long period. But mainly he has whatever occurs to him. "This seventy-per-cent thing is a health craze, not a flavor craze. I've had seventy-per-cent bars that I wouldn't put in my compost pile. Does anyone have any idea what these percentages mean?

"I want surprises in my chocolate," he explained. "I don't want purity. I like peaks and valleys. Good beans, bad ones, the perfect and the flawed. Today, everyone wants the established names, the Ocumares, the Madagascars. I like getting in the truck and driving sixteen hours to a village that hasn't replaced its original stock with the latest hybrid. Every bean is a story."

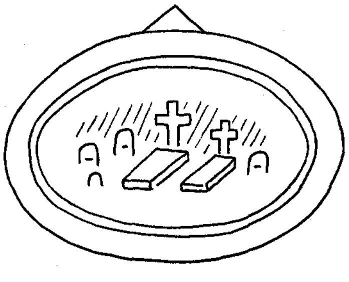
Schilling doesn't have the patience to conduct tastings over two years. "I prepare a flavor in my mind. Once it's there, I can make the actual physical object quickly." An idea occurs to him, invariably at night ("Bottles of red wine essential"), he realizes it in the morning (knife, toaster oven, spice grinder), and manufactures it in a week. He knows one appetite, one curiosity, and one palate: his own.

"What do I want from a chocolate?" he asked. "A beginning and an end. I start with the breast of a woman on her back." He illustrated with his hand how a breast flattens when a woman lies down. "That's my flavor curve. You start with the belly." He used his forefinger like a pencil. "You then move up her body, climbing slowly, rising up the flattened curve of the breast, gently, and the nipple pops out suddenly. Have you noticed how a woman's nipple pops out when she is on her back? Then you slide down, an elegant finish." He looked at me. "It always comes back to sex."

He also makes tinctures: "Clarity" for mornings, "Moon Cycle" for a woman's period, and "Eros," a constellation of every tribal moonbeam fringe aphrodisiac he could find. It was foul; it tasted like a drug store. I asked Schilling if he used it. "Oh, yes." He cited an ingredient, damiana, that he once mixed into a chocolate served at a party. He won't do that again. "People were having sex on a couch."

I stared at the bottle. You took it in a dropper.

"We don't sell a lot of these here in New York," Schilling said. "It's probably a West Coast thing."



He has three drinking chocolates—he brushes his teeth with the unsweetened one—and recently experimented with another, made from raw seeds. I didn't know that this wasn't done—that flavors aren't really created until a seed has been fermented and dried—until I tried it. It was like black dirt. Why make a drink that tastes disgusting?

"Antioxidants," he said. "The benefits are frickin' off the charts. But most never even make it into the product." He offered an example: "Dutching," a process developed in 1828 by Coenraad van Houten, a Dutch chemist. The fats in chocolate are notoriously temperamental and don't like water, and the drink had always been grainy. Van Houten figured out how to squeeze out most of the fats with a heavy press, and then pulverize the cakey leftovers into a powder: better, but still silty. He then added an alkaline, sodium carbonate, and rendered the smooth modern cocoa. But alkaline destroys antioxidants.

"You will never understand cacao until you see it in the tropics," Schilling said one day. He mentioned Diego Badaró, a "spiritual brother" who farms it in the rain forests of Brazil. We should go to Bahia, Schilling proposed. And I agreed.

A few weeks later, Badaró at the wheel of a Land Rover, Schilling and I entered cacao country at five in the morning, an hour before a tropical dawn revealed green, foggy wet hills, the landscape of the Mata Atlântica, the rain forest of the Brazilian coast. A banner of welcome was stretched above the road, Highway 101. We'd been driving south for six hours, having set out from Salvador, Bahia's capital. We ate cacao beans to stay awake. We stopped at a twenty-four-hour tapioca stand. We passed a muddy market square, with posts to tie your horse. A monkey ran across the road.

"*Jupara*," Badaró said.

Jupara was the mythic animal that introduced cacao to the rain forests here. It is said to have entered Bahia bearing a pod, which it broke open, eating the pulp, discarding the seeds, and sowing the first tree, having run from the Amazon Basin, two thousand miles away. Most botanists believe the fruit originated in the Amazon, and they continue to find new varieties there—more than anyone can count, each an expression of a unique micro-rain-forest spot. Bahia is the Amazon's geographical next-of-kin: the same climate, forest canopy, diverse floor. But there is no wild cacao; the tree was introduced, most likely by a Frenchman, Louis Frederick Warneaux, who, in 1746, sowed seeds near one of Bahia's large rivers.

By then, the fruit, which grows in the shade in warm, wet latitudes—the "twenty-twenty zone"—had migrated from the Amazon Basin, adapting and cross-pollinating along the way, west and north through Venezuela, Panama, southern Mexico, where it was cultivated by a succession of Mesoamerican civilizations. The Olmecs, on the Gulf Coast, were the first, around 1300 B.C. They called it *kakawa*. You still find semi-wild trees in Mexico's humid lowlands, and some of the world's fruitier blond-brown chocolate comes from family holdings there. Mayans were next. By 1519, when Hernán Cortés and his army attended an Aztec feast on the island capital of Tenochtitlán (now Mexico City) and witnessed the seed in a beverage, cacao was a profoundly sophisticated food.

The Spaniards had seen nothing like it. The "beans," as dried seeds were called, were roasted over a fire; crushed into a paste; flavored with flowers, chilies, black pepper, and vanilla; diluted with cold water; poured between vessels until a froth formed; and served in a lacquered gourd, by a train of solemnly reverent women, to Motecuhzoma Xocoyotzin. Montezuma drank it all night—fifty cups, by one account—and *cacahuatl*, when later presented in Europe as *chocolatl*, would have two specific associations arising out of the high theatre of its introduction: as an élitist food (only the ruler drank it) and an erotic one (the suggestive female attendants). It had more rarefied associations among the Aztecs. For them, it was a divine food: the gift of a deity, Quetzalcóatl, and used in the worship of Xochiquetzal, a fertility goddess. It was consumed at births, sacrifices, and funerals. It was a trading currency—three beans bought you a fresh avocado, one an overripe one—and hoarded in storehouses. (Nine hundred and sixty million beans were counted in one stash, according to Sophie and Michael Coe in their "True History of Chocolate," the best account of cacao in Mesoamerica.) The Aztecs couldn't grow it—they had the wrong climate—and, like others, depended on colonies of rain-forest farmers.

Among them were the Kekchi Mayans, in Guatemala. In 1544, a group was invited to Spain by Dominican priests and, in an audience with Prince Philip, the future king, made Europe's first recorded chocolate drink. Commercial shipments began in 1585, arriving in Seville, and by the early sixteen-hundreds the beverage—the Aztec preparation, served warm, with European flavorings (sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg)—had its own high-society rituals, including ornate serving vessels and a *molinillo*, a stirrer to make the froth. The beans were probably from Guatemala, the blond-brown variety prized today. Spaniards call it *criollo*, the "native."

In London, the first chocolate shop opened, on Gracechurch Street, in 1657. Two private clubs, White's and the Garrick, got their start as chocolate houses. By 1664, when Pepys was writing about the new beverage ("To Mr. Blands and there drank my morning draught in good Chocolatte, and slabbering my band sent home for another"), he was a representative European consumer. He didn't understand what he was drinking, had no idea how it was made, and knew only that it came from the New World and that he wanted as much as he could get. In the face of a global shortage, an equatorial panic set in, and prospectors and opportunists fanned out across the tropics, looking for wild trees and planting new ones. Spaniards started finding a darker, more bitter variety in South America, an immigrant cousin of the Amazon Basin's original bean, which they called *forastero*, the "newcomer." By the end of the seventeenth century, the Spanish had found trees in Venezuela and Ecuador. They planted some in Trinidad, the French planted in Martinique, the English in Jamaica. Jesuits finally discovered the original *forastero* along the Amazon, the wild breed that had started everything, an astonishing bounty. But it was deep in the backcountry, and their harvest often rotted before reaching a port.

The Rio de Contas, a wide, almost deltalike river, was startling, a sudden big sky and a feeling of openness, and very bright. It was noisy with birds. The rain forest houses most of the earth's plant and animal population. I hadn't anticipated it would be so loud. The effect was unexpectedly welcoming: you felt isolated but not alone. Badaró's property was called Monte Alegre, and was some miles away. The road was flooded, not really a road but a shallow bog, with giant holes that seemed deep enough to sink the vehicle. The air smelled of burning wet wood. We passed a house, once white, now moldy black and fighting off the forest, its front door long gone, five small children in front, a cloying, damp smoke coming out of a chimney. We passed another, with a sliding roof, the drying area for cacao beans, built to close up when it rained. There were monkeys, hawks, and toucans. There were pigs, chickens, and a mule. An old man was out for a hunt, followed by his wife. He looked cantankerous and unhopeful, carrying a musket and a bag of homemade ammunition.

The road climbed a hill. A cacao plantation is a *fazenda*, and four hundred acres seemed large enough to fit the American sense of the word. But most of it was thick and impenetrable, cacao trees scattered throughout. It seemed to invert normal real-estate economics: *not* to use the land efficiently.

Badaró stopped the vehicle at his gate and got out. He was wearing high black boots and forest-green rain gear. He was tall, with some bulk, and had thick eyebrows and jet-black hair, parted in the middle. A machete was strapped to his belt. He was twenty-six but had the deliberate, unexcitable manner of an older man, and a deep baritone, referred to by his family as "the voice." He used it to speak to officials. In his bearing, he could have been sixty, with a dozen children. Instead, he had a thirty-four-year-old stepson. His wife, Luiza, a dark-haired artist, was fifty-five, the same age as his mother.

He had eccentricities. On the journey down, he had turned off the headlights—despite curves, blind hilltops, other vehicles—in order to see the stars better. He drove at bewildering speed. He lost control once, the Land Rover snapping back and forth in a succession of extreme hydroplaning skids. He often prayed: to Ewa, a god of serpents; to Oxossi, the hunter god (Badaró's personal deity); and to a dozen others, West African in origin. One night, I accompanied him to a worship service in Salvador—an airless room, chanting, drums, members working themselves into a trance, throwing themselves about, jabbering—and met his mother, Katia. A warrior woman—helmet, dagger, breastplate—grabbed Badaró, made battle cries, and grunted.

At the *fazenda*, Schilling spotted the first cacao. It was like a toy football, green and unripe, attached to a tree trunk as though it had been stapled on: a hulking pod defying gravity and seeming to invite you to take a swipe at it. He saw more, full-sized footballs, bright yellow, mainly, but also red and orange-yellow, looking even more preposterously pendulant.

Badaró twisted a pod off a trunk and lopped off the top with his machete. The inside was creamy wet. It smelled of honey and orange and perfume. This was the pulp surrounding the giant seeds. The seeds looked like wet white maggots. Nothing suggested chocolate. Badaró stuck his fingers inside, pulled out some seeds, and tipped them into my hand, and I ate them. They had a slimy, sweet zing, more liquid than substance, and as I rubbed them against the roof of my mouth the pulp disintegrated. I was left with four seeds—still a mouthful. I bit one gently. It was bitter, awful. I spit it out.

The spitting is everything. Cacao has peculiar rain-forest dependency. If the pod is not removed, it shrivels and the seeds die. It needs to tempt whatever happens by—monkey, man, squirrel, rat—to stop, wrestle it off its stubby stalk, break it, drink the nectar, eat the pulp (or try to), and cough out the seeds. No creature likes the seeds; the fruit's future is in its immediate ejection. The seeds that end up on the rain-forest floor sprout within hours of exposure to the air.

Badaró lopped off another pod. I raised it over my head like a canteen, hoping to get a taste of *miel de cacao*, the honey. It is what remains after the seeds have been drained, but it keeps for no more than a day. You never see it outside the twenty-twenty zone. In Bahia, it is a specialty, drunk in the shade of the trees that made it.

We climbed back into the vehicle and followed a two-track road into the trees, where we found four men sitting on the ground, surrounded by yellow fruits, thwacking them rhythmically with their machetes, digging out the pulp, and tossing the empty pods to the side. The pulp was heaped into a white, gooey mound, and a viscous liquid trickled down into a receptacle. Badaró poured some of it into a discarded pod.

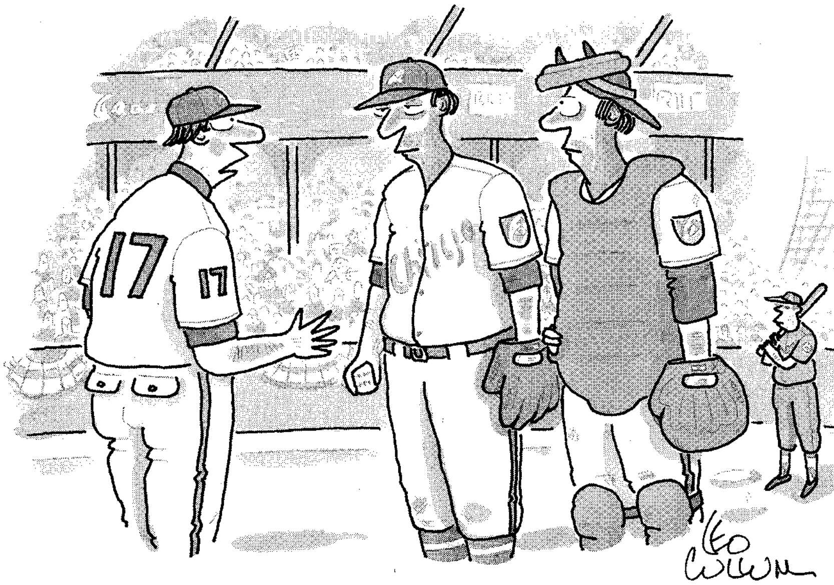
It had the same bright citrus flavor that made the pulp so startling. How could there be citrus notes? I identified acidity and sugar; I thought of grapefruit, qualities associated with a sun-ripened fruit: a translucent skin, exposure to direct light. But a cacao pod has a white, inch-thick shell, like a chunk of Styrofoam.

Badaró poured more into my gourd. It seemed to balance sweetness and acidity, weight and liquidity, mouthfeel and perfume; if not universal in its appeal, it was clearly irresistible to all but a few palates. In effect, the tree had made a monkey out of me so I could help it along by spitting out the seeds.

In Bahia, the cacao business started slowly because the rewards came so slowly: you stuck a sapling into a wild, uninhabited land and waited. It might be ten years before you saw money from the fruit. Offspring of the Frenchman's first tree may have been growing since the eighteenth century, but no cacao was harvested until the demand from Europe was great enough to make the labor worthwhile. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the Dutch had reinvented chocolate as a beverage, and the cacao butter extracted in the process had been used by the Cadbury brothers, in England, to make their first bar.

By 1850, chocolate was being made in factories, on a much larger scale. By then, farmers in Bahia had developed the *cabruca* system, a way of cultivating a wild tree in a wild forest by thinning out the understory—trunks, dwarf palms, vines—planting in the cleared space, and preserving the canopy for protection: the rain forest disturbed but basically intact. (The earth is almost sterile; nutrition comes from the trees.) By then, the Bahians also recognized that their harvest had a better chance of reaching port than anything hauled out of the Amazon. The forest wasn't less impenetrable; it just grew right up to the sea, and deep rivers led out of it.

But it wasn't easy, even by 1920, as Roy Nash, an ex-army adventurer, observed in the three years he spent in the region. On a visit to a cacao plantation on the Rio de Contas, Nash came across an Olympian effort: a gang of workers driving mule-led pack trains, trying to get their harvest to a rail depot and then to port, "troop after troop struggling with their precious cargoes through mud that ate the very heart out of the beasts and through water that ate much cash value out of the beans. Two days to the railroad, two days back, two weeks for the animals to recuperate!" Nash's account, "The Conquest of Brazil" (1926), is a rare contemporary document of what was becoming an unusually secretive land visited by few foreigners, mainly because, as Nash saw firsthand—in flight from a cacao gang of two hundred "with Winchesters across their saddles"—this giant territory was simply not governed. He witnessed a shooting at a dance, a stab-



"I'm bringing in the lefty, and your bobblehead has been recalled for lead-based paint."

bing on a train, a private army stopping an election, another in a battle with the governor's troops, a gangster's "game of raid, rape, and run," hired gunmen, and "colonels" everywhere—landowners entitled to make their own laws and enforce them with armed deputies.

By then, Badaró's family had been producing cacao for thirty years. The family knows nothing of the first Brazilian Badaró, except that he was born in Sicily and arrived in the eighteen-fifties. Of the second generation, they know of a son, Antônio, a man of visionary industry, who cleared the understory along the Rio Almada, twenty miles of a famously fertile tract where cacao thrives, and planted millions of trees. We drove over the river during the night. By the time Antônio passed the enterprise on to his oldest sons, Juca, Senhor, and Domingos, it was one of the largest in Brazil, hundreds of thousands of acres on one bank. Another family, the Oliveiras, were on the opposite bank.

"IT'S SWEET TO BE REMEMBERED"

No one's remembered much longer than a rock
is remembered beside the road
If he's lucky or
Some tune or harsh word
uttered in childhood or back in the day.

Still how nice to imagine some kid someday
picking that rock up and holding it in his hand
Briefly before he chucks it
Deep in the woods in a sunny spot in the tall grass.

SUNLIGHT BETS ON THE COME

The basic pleasures remain unchanged,
and their minor satisfactions—
Chopping wood, building a fire,
Watching the elk herd
splinter and cruise around the outcrop of spruce trees

As the deer haul ass,
their white flags like synchronized swimmers' hands,
Sunlight sealing—stretched like Saran wrap—
The world as we know it,
keeping it fresh-flamed should tomorrow arrive.

Now there was not enough cacao in the world to meet demand. Chocolate had become a wholly different food—a mass-market global confection—because a way had been found to make it with milk, previously impossible, owing to the fats' absolute intolerance of anything with water in it. (People had been trying to mix chocolate and milk since cacao beans arrived in Seville; the model was probably coffee.) The trick was in manipulating the boiling point. In 1867, Henri Nestlé, in Vevey, on Lake Geneva, trying to create an infant formula that wouldn't spoil, put milk in a sealed container, removed the air with a crude pump, and heated it until the water content evaporated. In a vacuum, milk boils at a lower temperature and doesn't curdle. Nine years later, Daniel Peter, the town's chocolate manufacturer, fed the formula to a newborn baby and understood an essential implication: a dried milk would not be rejected in cacao. Chocolate now had a populist formulation, its intensity diluted and dulled by sweet fats. It was an indulgence (fat + fat + sugar) and it was cheap (because milk was the principal ingredient), and by the time Peter's Chocolate won a gold medal at an Amsterdam exhibition in 1883, people couldn't get enough of it. By 1901, Peter's Chocolate had a U.S. distributor and an unobstructed horizon to expand to. No American had figured out the boiling trick, although many tried, including Milton Hershey, whose milk kept curdling, until finally, after years of experiments, Hershey settled for what he could get: milk chocolate that was slightly soured but not entirely ruined. (To this day, American milk chocolate makes Europeans gag.) By 1905, Juca, Senhor, and Domingos were running Antônio's estate. The same year, Hershey opened his new chocolate factory.

The sons had never seen a northern chocolate factory. They didn't know how to make chocolate. They didn't eat it. But they had seen booms before: a raw resource is discovered (diamonds, gold, rubber) and is wanted on the other side of the earth—and many people had become rich. Even the Rio de Contas had been mined for diamonds. Cacao was just the next thing. There was a rush to get to Bahia before others got there first.

In twenty years, the region went from producing almost none of the world's cacao to most of it. Ilhéus—a provincial port in 1885 (sugar, coffee, timber)—became a boom town, with gaudy baroque mansions, cacao barons, night life, a celebrity prostitute, towering warehouses, harbor congestion, brokers, lawyers, tax inspectors, the agencies and excesses of sudden wealth.

All of this appears in the work of Jorge Amado, the region's chronicler. Amado's family moved to Ilhéus in 1914, when he was two, after a major flood destroyed their plantation; he died in 2001, at eighty-eight, after generating thirty-two books, seven movies, and a soap opera watched by twenty-five million. At the heart of Amado's region is the high drama of a flawed squatter's right: all property had been acquired by possessing, then defending—possibly a reasonable practice in 1850, definitely a dangerous one later, when desperate arrivals believed chocolate would make them rich. Claims had been filed at the Cartório de Ofícios, in Itabuna. Between 1905 and 1910, it burned down: no records, anarchy, and everyone at war with everyone else. It was rebuilt; new claims were received; it burned down again. Cacao made Amado

CONSOLATION AND THE ORDER OF THE WORLD

There is a certain hubris,
or sense of invulnerability,
That sends us packing
Whenever our focus drops a stop, or the flash fails.

These snaps are the balance of our lives,
Defining moments, permanent signs,
Fir shadows needling out of the woods,
night with its full syringe.

WE HOPE THAT LOVE CALLS US, BUT SOMETIMES WE'RE NOT SO SURE

No wind-sighs. And rain-splatter heaves up over the mountains,
and dies out.
October humidity
Like a heart-red tower light,
now bright, now not so bright.

Autumn night at the end of the world.
In its innermost corridors,
all damp and all light are gone, and love, too.
Amber does not remember the pine.

—*Charles Wright*

into a writer—and in an introduction to "The Violent Land" (1943) he expresses his debt. He doesn't thank the Badaró family, although it is their stories he tells, using their real names, a dizzying feature to come upon for the first time, as if the novel were a history, and maybe it is. The Badarós, too, were at war. Their adversaries were the family across the river.

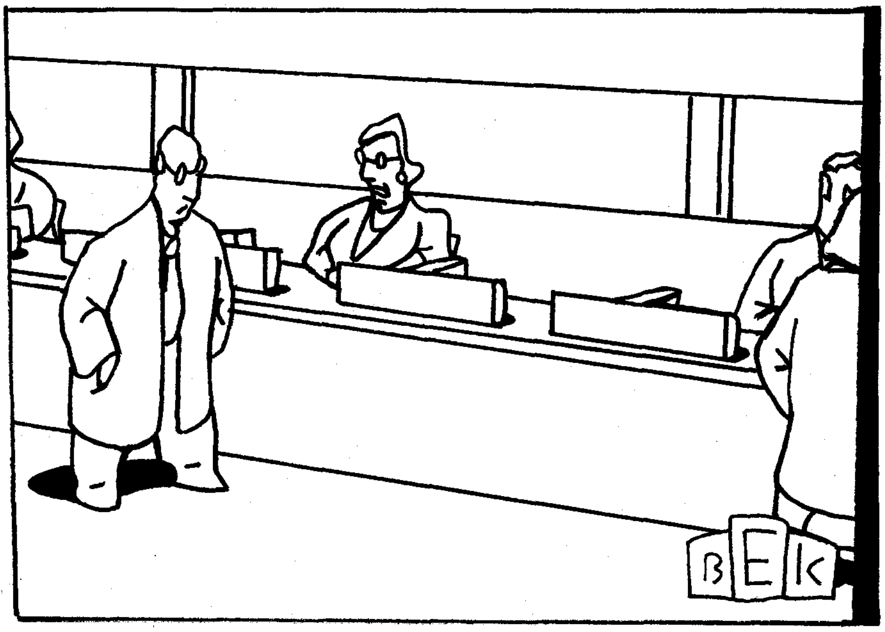
At Monte Alegre, Badaró revealed that he had learned of a ninety-three-year-old Oliveira survivor, his head and neck still laced with hacking scars. He had retained a heavy bell that had been rung when his home was under attack, and he still spat when he heard his rivals' family name. We made an effort to visit him—Badaró nervous, gravely imagining a reconciliation across generations—and then discovered that the man had died. A granddaughter owned a restaurant near Ilhéus called Tocaia Grande, where she displayed the family weapons as trophies. In Bahia, *tocaia* has a historically specific sense, referring to a particular kind of isolated rain-forest assassination: a hired gunman, lying in ambush, in a land too big ever to hold him accountable. Amado's father had been the target of a *tocaia;* it may have been partly why he fled the *fazenda* with such dispatch. There would have been no negotiation. You want a neighbor's land? You kill him. Or you pretend to buy it, visit, bear a gift, and kill him. Or you offer property to a man who has never had it, often an ex-slave, provided he clears and cultivates it, and five years later, never having filed the claim, you kill him: an efficient way of planting trees.

Katia, Badaró's mother, growing up on an isolated cacao farm, had been kept ignorant of family history by a protective father, who died when she was sixteen. That year, she made a friend in school, Paloma Amado, the novelist's daughter, and "the bell jar I had been living in shattered," she told me. I met her brother, Badaró's uncle, who had notions about the number of fatalities, but vague ones, because he, like other members of the family, had learned what he knew from Amado's book. In it, two of Antônio's sons are shot: Sinhô in a fight, Juca by *tocaia*. The third son is not a character. This was the uncle's grandfather and the man he was named after, Domingos: the pacifist, a quiet farmer and peacemaker, who, on New Year's Day, 1910, ended the violence by marrying a member of the Oliveira family, Anita. According to Badaró's uncle, she was a "remarkably ugly woman," but one who "genuinely loved him. She was courted clandestinely—our own Romeo and Juliet—and their marriage ended the cacao wars."

Diego Badaró didn't read Amado's novel until 2003, the year he decided to devote his life to cacao and needed to understand the burden of his family's legacy. By then, most members had abandoned the rain forest, in the aftermath of witches'-broom.

Witches'-broom appeared in 1989. It is a fungus that attacks the tree and its fruit, often as it is about to be harvested (overnight, the pod shrivels into a stick and the leaves go brown—hence the name). There was no cure. Cacao is a monoculture crop in Bahia and has always been vulnerable to a sudden disease. The fungus, indigenous to Latin America, could have come from anywhere—a ship's hold, the flatbed of a pickup truck, the bottom of a boot.

Once the blight appeared, it spread with baffling efficiency, in all directions. In the second year, ten million trees were infected; half the harvest rotted and was thrown away. By its fifth year, the disease had reached forty-five million trees, eighty per cent of everything ever planted. Five billion dollars had been lost. There were suicides. People wanted out but had no exit. Banks had inventories of foreclosed properties that they couldn't sell. The warehouses by the pier in Ilhéus were abandoned and now teeter dangerously, the windowpanes gone. The pier is closed, and access to it is roped off for fear of collapse. A hundred and fifty thousand people lost work. In a region so rural, they have no prospects and live on scavenged manioc root. You see the people on the mournful wet road to the sea, the stumps and trees of the original forest cleared a century ago to get the cacao to port, every few miles a plantation, once brazenly Brazilian, a bright turquoise or yellow, now faded to a ghostly pastel, overrun by packs of scrawny animals and occupied by barefoot families boiling water over fires on



"Would you like that all in money?"

• •

floors of manor-house bedrooms, the doors kicked out, the windows gone, the walls dissolving from exposure to the constant rain. The owners never appear. They can't get rid of the land, and they can't make money on it. The farms that haven't been reclaimed by the forest are run by aging managers who were left behind.

Badaró is the exception, and one of the youngest people to return to the forest. He looks after land abandoned by an aunt, by his mother, and his own Monte Alegre. By now, you can get a cacao rootstock that is resistant to the fungus. The forest has almost recovered by itself, although I still saw affected trees everywhere, including on Badaró's property, the seeds of the pod black, cobwebby, and spoiled-smelling.

One morning in Salvador, Badaró took me to the market of São Joaquim. The bounty of Brazil—bananas, cocaine, diamonds, rubber, gold, coffee, vanilla, teak, nutmeg, mahogany, sugar, cacao—has always passed through the port city. At the market, you see some of that bounty—the plenitude of an extreme, tropical botany.

Badaró introduced me to hundreds of fruits, aisle after aisle of them. I bit into a bulbous *caja-umbu*, with so much juice it squirted me from head to foot, a long, curving, herbaceously fragrant yellow arc. I delicately ate my way around a *caju*, red like a tomato, pulpy like a mango, and with a pod on the outside that was fatally poisonous. A yellow berry, a *caza*, was so sweet and complex that it excited an entrepreneurial fantasy: should I try to export it? There were remedies: A leaf rubbed into a wound was an anti-inflammatory. A seed made into an infusion treated a headache, an unwanted pregnancy, a brain injury. "Ah, *catuaba*," Badaró declared, affectionately holding up a piece of wood. "I love this. It is very powerful!" *Catuaba* was an aphrodisiac.

I asked about a thick rope, rolled up like a sticky black snake on the ground. It was wild tobacco, a wholly different species from the domesticated Virginia leaf. "The most effective natural insecticide in the world," Badaró said. "I dust my plants with it." I bought a three-inch chunk, scrutinized it—wet like motor oil—and popped it into my mouth. I sucked, recognized the flavor of aniseed, and chewed. The chewing released a heat not unlike a chili's.

It was a warm afternoon. We made for an exit by way of a butchers' aisle—in a nose-to-tail art, the cuts, hanging graphically, were principally of the art's nether regions. A girl with a basket of lemons abruptly stopped in front of me and poked one of the items, displayed on a tray of black-rimmed eyeballs. I'd kept chewing, and an interaction of some kind had occurred between the juices in my mouth and what had been released by the wild tobacco. My tongue had gone numb and the roof and inner cheeks were very hot. Sweat cascaded from my eyebrows, suddenly, as though a valvelike gland had been opened, and my pulse increased. I was also producing an unfamiliar saliva, which filled my mouth. I spit it out. We reached the street. Badaró, in white linen, crossed in front of me, his bright sleeves swelling in the breeze. My mouth filled again.

Wild tobacco is toxic; in some countries it is banned. The toxin is an alkaloid, a bitter-tasting compound formed by the plant as a defense against being eaten by insects and animals. A plant defends itself in many ways. An alkaloid is the most extreme, principally a response to big threats, and of the twelve thousand alkaloids known to science—quinine, codeine, cocaine, caffeine, ephedrine, strychnine, and nicotine among them—most come from the tropically wooded twenty-twenty zone. Many, like wild tobacco (*Nicotiana rustica*), originate in Brazil. An implicit dynamic was at work; every fruit, bark, seed, and root had a complexity you didn't find in a temperate climate. It was defensive.

In the dynamic, I understood cacao, the best-defended fruit in tropical botany. Its sugary seed lands on a rain-forest floor, exposed. It is subjected to the most congested predator traffic (and the highest concentration of microbes, fungi, and possible bacterial attack) on the planet. Cacao contains, unusually, not one alkaloid but several, including caffeine, found in many tropical plants, and theobromine, found in few. It has more than five hundred other chemical compounds, also mainly defensive in purpose. Their benefits were first described by Andrew Waterhouse, in a study, published in *The Lancet* in 1996, that examined polyphenol content. A polyphenol is an antioxidant. Red wine has plenty: two hundred and ten milligrams. A forty-gram bar of dark chocolate has nine hundred and fifty-one. "There is such a concentration," Harold McGee, the author of "On Food and Cooking," told me, "that they create much of chocolate's uniqueness—the bitterness, the astringency, the edginess, and other sensations that we don't know about."

I discovered some of them during the all-night drive from Salvador. I had eaten one bean after another, hoping to find in it a version of what I believed to be the ultimate flavor of chocolate, when, unexpectedly, I experienced a flat-out, unmitigated euphoric stimulant buzz.

Badaró nodded, knowingly.

What had happened? Was it the caffeine? I'd asked.

No, too little. (A dark-chocolate bar has the equivalent of one cup of coffee.) Theobromine, he said.

Although theobromine can cause cardiac arrest in dogs, it appears to affect the human nervous system in only modest ways. It creates a few undisputed physiological symptoms. It makes you pee, for instance. Cacao has pharmacological ingredients, including serotonin, the mysterious neurotransmitter of well-being; a cannabinoid component, similar to what is found in marijuana; and a neuromodulator, phenylethylamine, an amphetamine-like antidepressant. But the conventional view is that the quantities are too small to be significant. I felt unsupported by the science. But Badaró understood. So did his uncle Domingos. They ate the beans. Domingos sometimes ate nothing else for days. On the drive, Badaró had also offered me kola nuts, one of the original ingredients in Coca-Cola. "It will also make you alert." Kola also has theobromine.

Fermentation has been around forever. It is older than cooking. It was probably the first method of food preparation. Fermentation transforms grapes into wine, grains into beer, wheat into leavened bread. It transforms a raw ingredient, often valued for its nutrition, into one valued for its taste. It yields vinegar, yogurt, sauerkraut, cheese, prosciutto, vanilla, and pickles. It occurs most readily in fruits, because they have, in abundance, the two essential elements: sugar and yeast. A yeast is on a leaf or a branch or in the air. It is the fine white powder on the skin of a grape, like a dust that you should wash off. At its most basic, fermentation is how sugar becomes alcohol.

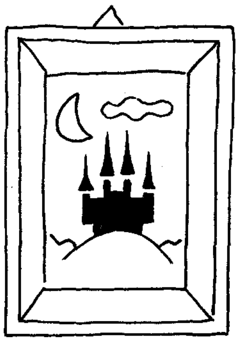
In the long history of the rain forest, every hunter-gatherer familiar with the cacao pod would have seen evidence of fermentation. The seeds, in their sugary envelopes, ferment effortlessly. But only Mesoamerican culture understood what to do with them, because it had been using fermentation to prepare foods and alcohols for thousands of years, possibly as early as 7000 B.C., and knew how to control it. Badaró's process was fundamentally no different.

He conducted it in his "laboratory." It was a concrete shed. It had doorframes but no doors, an overhead light that had burned out, a temperature alarm that didn't work, a digital thermometer that was broken, and five large wooden troughs, like pigpens. It was the responsibility of Pedro Jardin, who had been running Monte Alegre for four decades.

Jardin was now seventy-two, evanescently thin, with high cheekbones and sad eyes. He rarely spoke and seemed never to smile. Jardin had grown up with cacao. By day, he was wrapped, from cap to bright rubber boots, in rain gear. One night, he surprised me. He was barefoot and stripped to the waist, bearing an old Winchester. A Colt revolver was tucked into his trousers. He also had a sawed-off double-barrelled shotgun with a Tommy-gun-style grip. He walked the river before bedtime, a stealthy patrol, tiptoeing in and out of the trees, and returned to lock everyone in for the night—a claustrophobic touch, I felt, until I was wakened by something hurling itself against my door. Each time the door was struck, it lifted off its hinges slightly—four or five times, a ferocious force—until whatever it was (animal? man?) went away.

Jardin was waiting for us at the lab. It was late in the afternoon, a still, equatorial twilight about to turn dark, in the sudden way of the tropics. You could smell what was going on from fifty feet. It was a brewery.

Inside, the room was shadowy and hot. The smells multiplied instantly, a sudden olfactory cargo: a brewery, but also a winery, a vinegar factory, a dairy. It could have been an exaggerated version of an English pub. There was a gas, mildly disconcerting. It singed the lungs but felt strangely pleasant.



Schilling inhaled. "Aaah, get those acetic acids up your nose."

One trough was full. The beans, about chest-high, were covered with banana leaves, a gently heaving green blanket, wrapped tight, an oven on high. The yeast plus sugar produced carbon dioxide, plus heat and alcohol. There were plenty of yeasts on the banana leaves, a rich source, an additional insurance that could kick-start a fermentation if it hadn't already begun, or else add to it. There were yeasts in the slats of the trough, the natural ones in the wood as well as those left over from previous fermentations. The beans had yeasts. The humid tropical air had them. The forest had them. I thought about the yeast in bread. This approach seemed less about control than about attack.

Badaró pulled back some leaves. The beans instantly released a more intense hit of everything we'd been smelling. It was alcoholic and vaporous.

They were in their third day of fermentation, and were now purply, the sweet pulp almost entirely gone, although still gooey. "A ton," Badaró said.

"A ton?" Schilling and I both asked, and looked again, feeling compelled to do the banal calculation. "Two thousand pounds?" The beans were so compact.

The full trough was separated from other empty ones by wooden slats. Badaró removed one so that he could shovel beans into the next space. No matter how tightly everything was wrapped, the beans on top were cooler than the ones at the bottom. By shovelling everything next door, Badaró was turning them over. Normally, Jardin would then hop inside, shuffling beans under his boots, poking a toe into corners, to insure that every bean was equally fermented. Other foods are not fermented in this way. In wine, yeast converts the sugars in grapes into alcohol. No one worries if some haven't fermented. At the end, they, and the mashed skins and stems that remain, a shapeless purple sponge, are thrown out. With cacao, an infantry of yeasts converge on the pulp around a seed and convert it into alcohol—plus acids and carbon dioxide and heat, none of it important, because none of it is the point. The liquids drain away; the alcohol evaporates. The attack doesn't stop. The seed is heated to a temperature rarely seen in the natural world. The shell is savaged and penetrated, until the tissue inside is invaded. At the end, the bean is the equivalent of the grapey mash. It has been reduced in size. It smells powerfully of vinegar. Its proteins have been disfigured. If you open one up, its insides look as though they'd been obliterated. In the devastation, the extreme intensities of cacao are converted to flavors.

Badaró, meanwhile, was trying to fix his thermostat. He wanted to keep the temperature from exceeding a hundred and twenty-two degrees Fahrenheit, but he had no way of measuring it. The beans in the trough seemed hotter than that. I stared at them, trying to gauge how hot they might be, and then I did a thing that seemed strange at the time but was really just a misunderstanding. I took off my shirt, shoes, and pants, and, with my boxers on, I swung myself over the side and sank into the beans. They really were very hot.

I had wanted to get a sense of what you went through to complete cacao's strange fermentation, and had assumed that most people wouldn't be wearing many clothes. Jardin stared at me with a look of apparent horror.

Then Schilling removed his clothes, slipped into the beans, and was jubilant. "Yoni juice," he said. "Yoni of cacao juice." He filled his hands with beans, looked up, and poured them down on his face.

Badaró then removed his clothes. He landed with an awkward splash. Three of us were in a trough that might comfortably accommodate an adult pig, and the fermenting cacao was up to our necks. Badaró had taken to invoking some god, humming in his deep voice. "We must immerse ourselves and connect to the Aztec gods," he said. He disappeared, sinking below the surface. When he reëmerged, he was covered in goop: beans behind his ears, stuck to his eyelids, clinging to his hair.

When Schilling and Holderman returned to Boulder from their first Fancy Food Show, in the summer of 2001, he knew they had a winner. According to Holderman, he also had a plan: five years to build the company, then sell it. "We'll be rich!"

"In those days, it was still a 'we' thing," Holderman told me. Dagoba was owned by Schilling, his parents, his uncle, and Holderman. (She is unsure how many shares she had.) "That was 'our' goal—'rich' in five years. He doesn't remember saying this. But I do." (And he doesn't: "I am very confident I didn't state this. I'll take a lie-detector test.")

They had a division of labor: he made; she sold. Her calls were done cold. "'Want to try a new chocolate?' No one said no. I was peddling a legalized drug." Schilling filled the orders, pouring each one with a measuring cup, eight hours a day, the easy rhythm of a repetitive task, fuelled by vast quantities of marijuana.

One morning, he got a call from an East Coast distributor, his first, who wanted ten thousand bars. "I was excited," Schilling said, "and then thought, Oh, shit, I have to pour each one." For ten eighteen-hour days, he did nothing else. His mother, who lived in Minnesota, flew in to help. She arrived on a Friday, wrapped bars until three in the morning, dizzy from the glue stick used to seal them, and returned to the airport on Sunday night. After the first distributor, others followed. ("They could now trust the neophyte manufacturer with his odd chocolates.") The orders meant success, but also chaos. Schilling forgot to order wrappers. The air-conditioning broke. Chocolate was compromised. The basement flooded. The accounts were bad lecture notes. "We were winging it. We needed Papa Jon."

Schilling's father was, in Holderman's description, single-dimensional and myopic: "We were just going for each other." He was a threat. To the father, she was just the girlfriend. He never disliked her ("She was, above all, an absolutely gorgeous, stunning, vivacious young lady"); he just didn't rate her. He never imagined her as a partner in the future business, even though she was a co-founder and a shareholder. The son was the project, "a visionary," but with no register of risk, no future tense. "He couldn't even spell the word 'business.' " They had issues. The father didn't "get" organics. "They argued constantly," Holderman said. "Every day, over morning coffee, at lunch, it was nothing but the business. I wasn't interested in business."

There were fights, hysterics. "The females in my life, both personal and professional, have been very emotional," the father observed. "I don't think I will ever understand their psyche."

Holderman began, in her words, "acting out in a mild way and then not such a mild way." She told Schilling: Marry me and take me away.

He gave her a ring and they moved to Ashland, a town of twenty thousand people, in southern Oregon. They found a space with a large walk-in refrigerator and tables for packing. It was thrilling, according to Holderman, a "bona-fide chocolate factory." But the father followed. Then the mother moved there from Minnesota; the sister from California. "At least, I was still his business partner," Holderman said. If she hadn't been, she recognizes, she would never have seen Schilling, because, astonishingly, he was still pouring bars by hand. In the summer of 2002, the company made its first million dollars in sales, but Schilling was in the back with his measuring cup, "smoking a big stick during the lunch hour," convinced that anyone buying his chocolate would know he had personally made it. He couldn't keep up. By Dagoba's second anniversary, he finally bought a small depositor, a machine that fills molds. Sales tripled by the end of the year, reaching three and a half million dollars. They then bought a huge machine, costing two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, paid for by selling five per cent of the company to his mother's six siblings (putting its worth at probably around seven million dollars). But in Holderman's view nothing was changing. Her mother came one weekend and was put to work. "We wrapped bars until we could no longer stand, went home, passed out, got up, did it again. My mother wasn't unhappy to help. I was unhappy she had to."

In fact, there had been a change. Schilling had had a "visitation." A woman had appeared to him in a waking dream.

The predawn visitor was Xochiquetzal, a goddess of cacao. Schilling recognized her. He had been studying Mesoamerican religions, and believed cacao to be a sacred food. The reverence had been evident in the naming of his company, originally Gadoba, a temple, because eating a chocolate should be like a moment of prayer, "each bite a personal gadoba." He then wondered if Gadoba sounded too much like Godiva, the Belgian chocolatier. So he switched the "g" and the "d." "He just liked the sound," Holderman told me. He discovered later that a dagoba was a Buddhist shrine, and that worked, too.

The goddess asked Schilling to accompany her, and they flew over North America, across the Atlantic, and into West Africa, a first stop. As a child, Schilling hadn't liked chocolate because, like most of us, he had grown up eating what was made in West Africa, and he didn't like the flavor. Eighty per cent of the world's cacao comes from there, principally the Ivory Coast, where trees were planted in 1905, the year that chocolate became industrial and global.

West African cacao is cultivated by the "pioneer" method and has few of the vagaries of a rain forest. The plantations are tightly managed and mechanically irrigated, with close plantings and little shade, and exposed to an intense direct light that makes the trees hyperproductive. Schilling and Xochiquetzal watched what would happen next. ("You were hovering above on what—a carpet?" I asked. "No, just floating.") The trees quickly become exhausted, the farm is closed, a swath of forest burns, and the business starts over. Land is cheap, labor is cheap, the beans are cheap. There are problems: "black pod rot" (with the trees so crowded); a dependence on pesticides; accusations of child labor and slavery.

Xochiquetzal and Schilling flew east into Sri Lanka. Then Bali, Java, Malaysia, the Philippines—all developed to meet modern needs. They flew across the Pacific and reached South America, and found patches of parched earth, once a rain forest, the origins of cacao, now blighted and infertile, "dead-brown, like a scab." They inspected the Amazon Basin, on fire and with trees in flames. They flew up through Central America and paid a solemn visit to a Mayan tomb. Schilling was then returned to his bed. Xochiquetzal had a mission for him. He understood and swore an oath of allegiance.

He was shaking. The visitation had lasted forty-one minutes. It was five twenty-three. He woke Holderman and described what he had seen. "I didn't tell her I was now pledged to a goddess—I didn't want to hurt her."

Holderman sleeps deeply. "A dream?" she said, when I asked her about it. "Really? No, that one eludes me. A dream, you say?"

The couple broke up. "We had to," Schilling said. "I couldn't be unfaithful." Holderman returned to Boulder, married one of Schilling's good friends, and is now a massage therapist. Schilling hasn't had a serious girlfriend since ("I can't—I'm married to cacao"), now lives by the Mayan calendar, and began a life of manic tropical travel: in the past year, Costa Rica (twice), Panama, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Mexico, Ecuador, Peru, the Dominican Republic (three times), and Brazil (three times).

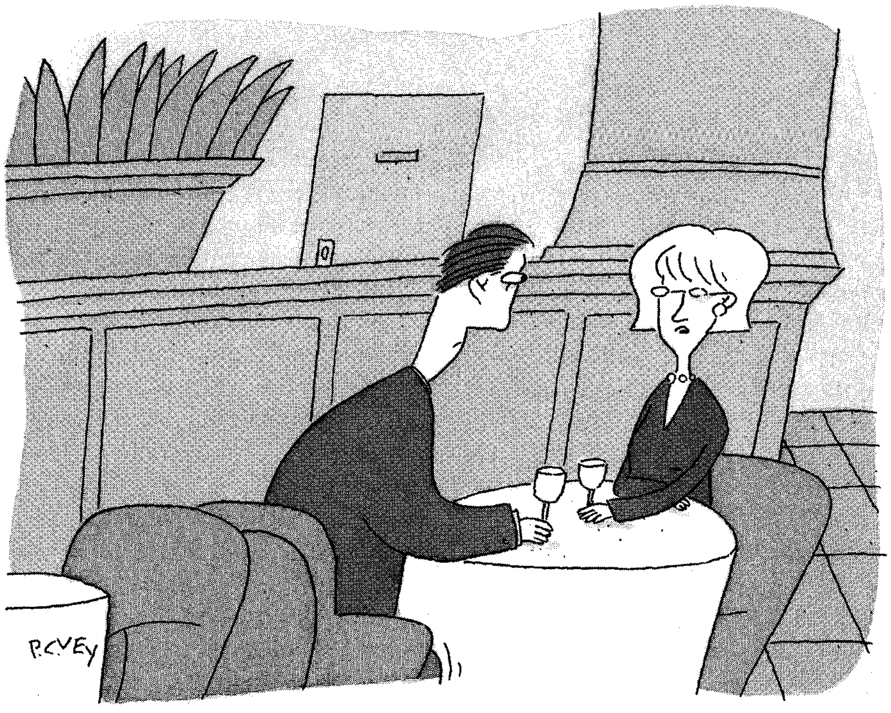
Last year, on October 19th, Schilling may have had another visitation. He remembers nothing, but he woke in a condition of heightened clarity. By then, he had fifty employees in Oregon. He was helping to sustain a coöperative farm in the Dominican Republic, a family in Peru, an enterprise in Guatemala. He made bars sold in Whole Foods, hippie pharmacies, organic markets, and beside the cash registers of independent bookstores.

He had an immodest vision that he couldn't stop thinking about. It involved all the stripped, torched, desiccated, denuded, barren land of the ruined tropics. Why couldn't he figure out how to buy it up, most of it worthless anyway, and replant it with cacao, and, in effect, reforest the planet with chocolate bars?

I had been advised about Schilling's ambitions. "He has no limits," Holderman had told me forcefully. She described a trip the two of them once took to visit her family in Pennsylvania, passing through the town of Hershey. She was silenced by the scale, memories of a childhood visit, the wonder of it all, and, turning to Schilling, was alarmed by his focus and what he appeared to be thinking: he seemed to be measuring his future against Hershey's achievements. Schilling wanted to be a player, and not just a normal high-stakes player but an ideological one: someone who could change the world.

On the morning of his clarity, Schilling called his father. For months, Papa Jon had been working out the details of a sale ("Frankly, I just wanted to get a good chunk of change"), even though it had never been approved by his son. "Let's do it," Schilling said, and by nightfall a deal was done—so quickly it seemed like a spontaneous act—and Hershey became Dagoba's owner. The price was seventeen million dollars. Schilling was retained as a consultant.

That night, Schilling met friends, broke down, and wept uncontrollably for twelve hours. He spent the next month defending himself from charges made by organic colleagues that he was a "sellout." "How could I make a difference at Dagoba, working on such a small scale?" he said repeatedly, an incomprehensible argument to people who had no idea that he wanted to plant two or three billion trees and that he had the support of a goddess. Holderman, who got the news by group e-mail, was one of the few friends who were not surprised. "It was right on time, wasn't it?" she said. Five years, give or take a month or two, since the first Fancy Food Show. ♦



"I'm going to a Halloween party as you."

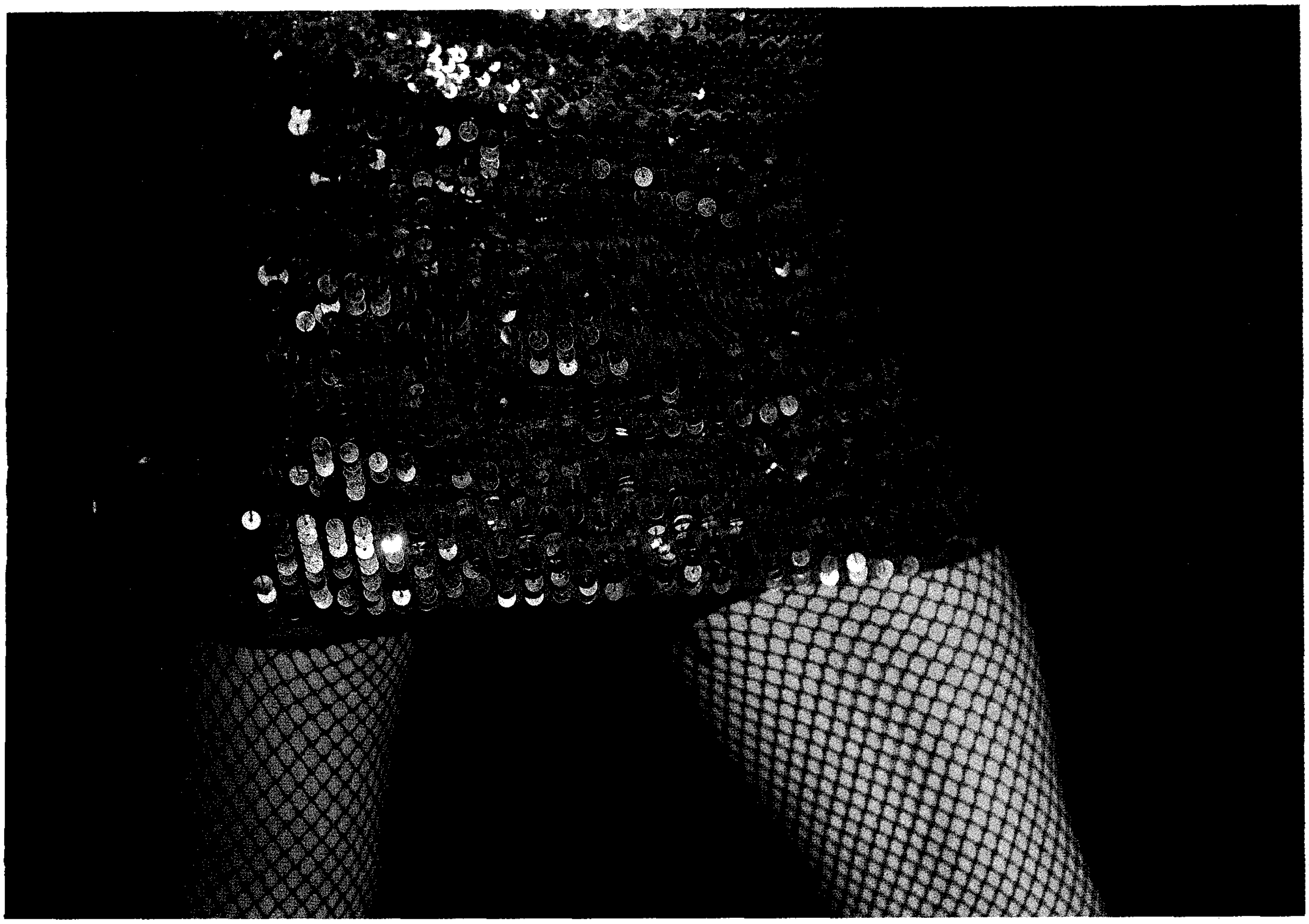
FICTION

THE COLD OUTSIDE

BY JOHN BURNSIDE

When the cancer came back, I wasn't surprised. I was upset for Caroline, knowing she'd have to be told eventually, and I was bothered about how Sall would take it, after last time. I was even sorry for Malky, because finding reliable drivers was difficult, and he'd always been a good boss. Still, I wasn't surprised, not when they told me. I'd been expecting something to go wrong since the summer, when Sall and I had talked about flying over to Montreal to see Caroline and meet her new boyfriend, then given up on the idea. Sall knew I was keen, of course: Caroline had always been Daddy's little girl, and, ever since she'd left, it had been an effort to hide how empty the house felt without her—an effort I'd sometimes failed to make. Sall probably knew as well as I did that I was on borrowed time, so to begin with she had gone through all the motions of planning the trip, but then she'd started talking about how expensive it was and how tiring it would be for me, having to drive over to Glasgow, then sit on the plane for seven hours, and then, after all that, there was immigration and customs, which took forever. The way she spoke, it was as if she'd made the journey herself, but she hadn't. She'd never even left Scotland, and all that talk about the Montreal customs was just stuff she'd picked up from Caroline, who'd been back three times in the six years since she got the job in Montreal. Not long before her last visit, though, she had met this new boyfriend and had started making a big thing about how it was our turn to go over there.

"I understand it's a long way," she'd said. "But you'll love it when you get there. You'll see. It'll be a nice holiday. Besides, Jim keeps asking me if you really exist. He thinks I made you up." She'd laughed, but the invitation was real, even if she didn't look at Sall when she said it but kept her eyes fixed on me. She was content to work around her mother for my sake, now that the two of them didn't have to live in the same house. For her, it was all about careful management, about avoiding those occasions when something might be said that couldn't be taken back. Even before she left, she had come and gone like a ghost, just so she didn't have to be with Sall. I'd never really un-



derstood why. I once overheard Caroline say that her mother could start a fight in an empty room, but that wasn't altogether fair. The two of them just weren't able to sit together without arriving at some kind of disagreement or misunderstanding. It was a mismatch of personalities, something that happened all the time, in all kinds of situations. It was shocking only when it happened between a mother and her child.

Whenever Caroline extended one of those vague invitations, I wanted to tell her that we'd come over as soon as we could, but Sall always got in first. "We'll see" was all she'd say, and then she would go to work, undermining the idea. That was what she had done during the summer, making up excuses and problems and eventually talking the trip out of existence, till we ended up driving down to Hertfordshire instead, for a sad fortnight of rain and tea shops with Sall's brother Tom and his second wife. I'd understood what was going on, and I told myself that it was probably for the best, what with the history between them; still, that so-called holiday was more of an upset than I'd expected. At first, I just put it down to the usual disappointment with Sall's games and the way I never seemed to be able to stand up to her, but somewhere in the midst of it all, wandering around a grimy little bric-a-brac shop in Stevenage, I realized that I'd given up the last chance I would ever have to visit Montreal.

So the knowledge was there, sitting at the back of my mind, waiting to come true, when the doctor told me. I was almost ready for it: almost accepting, the way you're supposed to be in all the stories they tell about dying. Not completely but close, just waiting to hear how it was going to be, so I could walk out of the surgery and get on with what was left of my life. I had a matter of months, the specialist thought, and the idea crossed my mind that I could do anything I liked. I was free. Except that there wasn't anything I wanted to do that much, apart from seeing Caroline, and I knew what Sall would say to that now. I'd heard it all before: how I had never had any time for anybody but my little girl, how I'd spoiled her rotten. To hear Sall talk, you'd have thought that what happened between them was all my fault, but I looked back in my mind's eye and I tried to find a picture, one reliable image of the two of them happy together, and I couldn't. Not even when Caroline was a baby. I could see me standing at the window in the back bedroom, rocking her to sleep and singing her Christmas carols, because they were the only songs I could remember, and I could see the two of us, when Caroline was six, going around and around on the horses at Flamingo Park, while Sall sat off by herself, watching, a curious, slightly bewildered look on her face, as if she were ashamed or embarrassed about something. I could see Caroline laughing at my bad jokes as we drove to school in the mornings, and I saw us making a row of snowmen in the garden—four of them, all identical. That was why I liked driving, and that was why I didn't mind going back on the road so soon, because when I was out there, on my own, I would look at those pictures in my head and I would be happy.

Anyway, the day after I got the diag-

OPPOSITE: DAVE GREENWOOD/GETTY IMAGES; HENRY HORENSTEIN/GETTY IMAGES

nosis, I was back at work, hauling treacle. When Malky called, that first evening, Sall told him I was fine, and that I'd be back in the morning. I didn't blame her for that; we needed the money. I suppose I should have been disappointed that she didn't want me at home, at least for a little while, but I wasn't. I knew it wasn't really her fault. She just didn't know how to deal with that kind of thing. Even before we left the surgery, I could feel her edging away, the way she always did whenever there was a problem. She slipped away into her own separate place, as she had done when we were first married and things weren't what either of us had expected, or during the long weeks after Caroline moved away and we were left stranded, speechless and unable to touch or even look at each other, alone together with the quiet of an empty house and a shelf's worth of pale photographs in the matching set of Shaker-style frames that Sall had bought at the Sue Ryder.

So I'm not blaming her. I was just as glad to go back on the road and not have to sit moping about the house. Besides, I've always liked pulling treacle—molasses, to give it its proper name. Every now and then, I run around the countryside, delivering the warm, dark slop that farmers use to supplement the fodder for their cattle, blending the treacle with barley to make a sweet malty mix that the beasts can't get enough of. I like going out on the farms, all quiet and lonely in the middle of the day; I like talking to the farmers and listening to their stories—men who have never been anywhere in all their born years save these hundred acres of ground, grown men haunted by their own holdings. To be honest, I like hauling treacle more than anything else. There are times when it's so thick and dark and solid you could walk on it, and we have to work hard to get it pumped out and into the big tanks, which are usually so old and creaky that you think they won't hold. Sometimes they don't. On a really warm day, one of the pipes, or maybe the wall of the tank, will give way, and there will be treacle everywhere: treacle and the smell of treacle that makes you dizzy, it's so sweet and strong.

It was hard work, but it was good being busy. It gave me less time to dwell. And I knew, when I started out that winter's morning, that I'd feel better coming home with a full day's work under my belt, knowing that I wasn't quite used up. I thought about that all day, driving round the farms in the frosty light—about how I would keep going till I couldn't go on anymore. All a man has is his work and his sense of himself, all the secret life he holds inside that nobody else can know. That was how it had always been, even at home: my real life was separate from the day-to-day business that Sall knew or cared enough about to make decisions. It wasn't that I didn't love her, at least to begin with; we got on well enough in the first few years. It was just that we'd always been private people, in our different ways. That was probably what made it possible for us to stay together after Caroline left. We knew how to keep ourselves to ourselves, a skill we had perfected through the years without even knowing how completely we had mastered it.

It was late in the afternoon, the sun just going down over the fields, the last of the light filtering through the trees and shrubs along the road by the old hospital. The first green of evening, my mother had always called it, sitting on the back step at home, watching the Peruvian lilies and the montbretia fade into the gloaming. I was never sure if that was a phrase of her own, or a quote from something, some radio drama, say, or a children's book she'd read to me in the days before memory. Usually, if I got home early, this was my time. While Sall made herself busy in the kitchen, I would sit in the dining room with the paper spread out on the table, or I would listen to the radio, staring out at the garden and fiddling with the dials to get a better signal. That day, though, I had pulled a long run, only just finishing up at Jacob's Well Farm when the dark set in. It had been a good day, but I knew I wasn't supposed to overdo it, so I was happy enough saying my goodbyes to Ben Walsh, who used to run Jacob's Well with his dad, and keeps it going himself now, his wife gone, no kids, both his parents dead. He had been living alone like that for some years by then, which was maybe why he paid so much attention to the few people he encountered. That day, it was attention I could have done without, but then he wasn't to know what my troubles were. He offered me a cup of tea, but he didn't seem to mind when I told him I'd better get on back. He gave me a solemn little smile and shook his head. "How's the missus?" he said. "Keeping all right?" He always talked about Sall as if she were an invalid.

"Can't complain," I said.

"That's good." He gave me an odd, shy look. "Still, if you don't mind me saying, you're looking a bit under the weather yourself."

"Oh, no," I said. "I'm fine."

"Yes?"

"I'm a bit tired, I suppose," I said. "It'll pass."

He nodded. He was curious and, I think, genuinely concerned, but he knew not to pursue it. "Well, I hope so," he said. "You take care of yourself. You don't want to be coming down with something, right before Christmas."

I managed a smile. "You can say that again," I said. "Anyway, this is the last of it, before the holidays. I'll get a good rest then. You take care, too." I shook his hand and got back into the rig. For a moment, I wished I'd said yes to the tea and stopped, not to talk about anything in particular but to keep company with the man for a while. I couldn't imagine that his Christmas would be that festive, with just him and the animals.

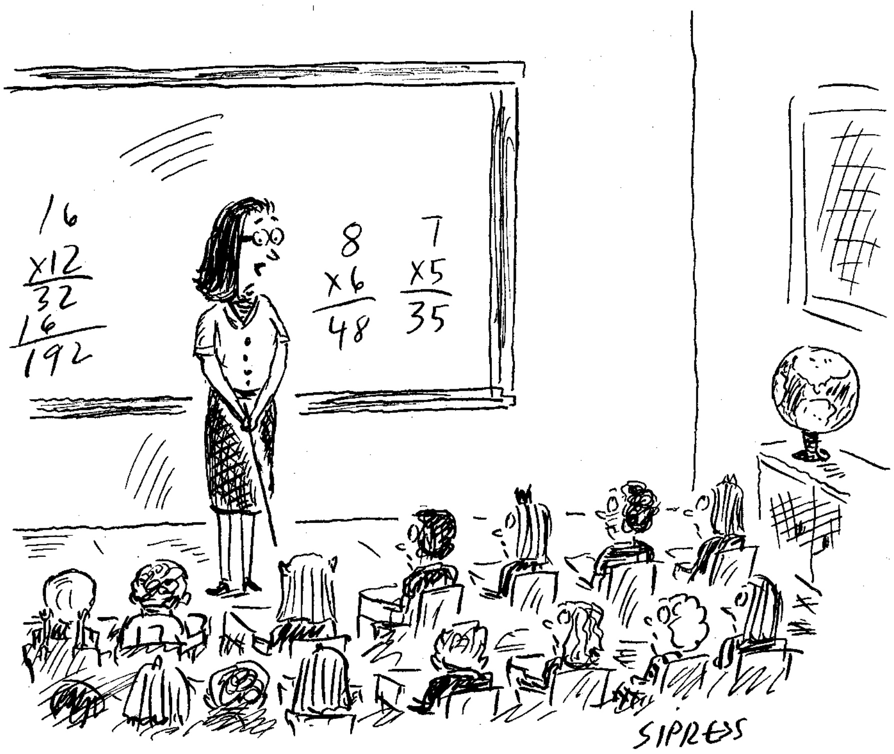
Then again, I couldn't imagine much of a Christmas for myself, now that everything was decided. I wasn't looking forward to the quiet of the holidays, or having to go through the motions with Sall, which she would want to do, because—well, it was Christmas. Maybe Caroline would ring, sometime in the middle of the afternoon, making the call first thing, so she could get on with the rest of the day knowing she'd done her duty. I hadn't said anything to her about the cancer, of course. I'd considered telling her the first time, but it would only have worried her, and then she might have felt duty-bound to come over. This time, I didn't even give it a second thought, because I knew for sure that I was going to die, and I wanted to do it in my own way. I wanted to let go of life with some kind of grace, or at least with some attention to what was happening, instead of just sitting quietly in the middle of some great drama between Sall and Caroline about what they thought I should do. That was how it had been through so much of my life: I hadn't missed any of the big events, but, at the same time, I hadn't felt entirely present while they were happening. Those last few weeks, though, I noticed everything. Like the way time would catch up with me all of a sudden, and I'd see myself opening a letter, or making a cup of tea: see myself from above, doing these ordinary little things and taking an odd pleasure in them, though I can't say why.

I'd notice things out on the road, too, things I'd seen a thousand times before and had liked without knowing why. Little details and imaginings I'd dismissed all my life as plain silliness suddenly became important. Like that stretch of road on the way back from the Glasgow run, when I would pass the turnoff for Larbert. I used to see it all the time: a blue road sign and a row of cherry-cola street lamps running off into the distance—Larbert, A9. It was odd how much I liked that sign. I'd never had reason to go to Larbert. We didn't do any runs in that direction, but maybe that was why I'd always liked the name. Larbert. It sounded like a place where the teen-age years went on forever, all gray days by the water and strange-tasting sweets that fizzed in your mouth, making you think of the possibility of sex. Not that I had ever known much about sex as a teen-ager, other than what I saw in films and the oddly pleasurable discomfort I felt when Rita Compton visited my sister.

That was the kind of stuff that was running through my head when I came across the boy, a few hundred yards into the woods, in the first of the heavy rain. I was thirty miles from home when it started, a thick sleet that might turn to snow later, or might come to nothing; it was already dark enough for headlights, but as I came into the woods, passing under the beech trees, it was like entering a little theatre, the lights flickering across the darkness, the woods black and still, like a backdrop. I'd always liked that about the woods, the way they suddenly closed in on me as if a story were about to be told. Like when I was a boy, and the announcer on "Listen with Mother" would say, "Are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin." Usually the road was empty, with maybe the odd set of headlamps—not a person, not even a car, just an effect of the light—streaming past in the opposite direction. But that night the story contained another character, though he wasn't a character from any of the children's books I knew.

To begin with, I thought he was a woman. Maybe I wouldn't have stopped if I'd known otherwise. He certainly looked like a woman: a black dress, no coat, fish-net stockings, ankle boots, shoulder-length wavy hair. She was walking slowly, toward the far end of that little avenue of beech trees, and I couldn't make out much, but when my lights picked her out she turned, and I saw that there was something odd about her, something heavy. Not that I guessed right away that she was a boy. It was dark and rainy, and then, when I saw her properly, I was distracted by the bruises on her face: the bruises, the mess her hair was in, the dark stain that might have been blood on her right leg, just below the hem of the dress.

I didn't pick up hitchhikers much. I did in the early days, and I'd enjoyed the chat most of the time. Not always, but enough to make it worthwhile. More recently, though, I'd preferred being alone in the cab. Some nights, coming home in the dark, reeling off the narrow roads that ran to Perth or St. Andrews, remembering the way by my own landmarks—the hedges and drystone dykes and the spaces between them that other people didn't even notice, tight angles of holly or lamplight as I came through a town—I would realize, with a pleasant rush of surprise, that I was fond of myself as I was, fond of my life, and yet, at the same time, not that worried about having to let it go. I had got past the stage when company seemed like a good thing on the road, and I have to admit that I thought about driving on that night, even after I'd noticed the gash on her leg. I didn't need complications, and by then everything that wasn't part of the usual schedule had come to seem unnecessarily complicated. Nevertheless, I made myself stop, and I pulled up alongside her—still thinking of this person on the road as a woman, possibly a woman in real difficulty—just to check, at least, that she was all right. I rolled down the window and leaned across to the passenger side. "You look like you ran into some trouble," I called out, trying to make myself heard above the engine and, at



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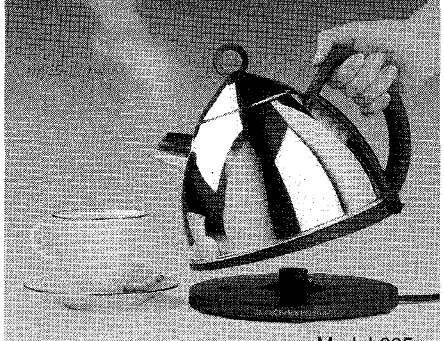

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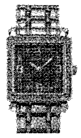

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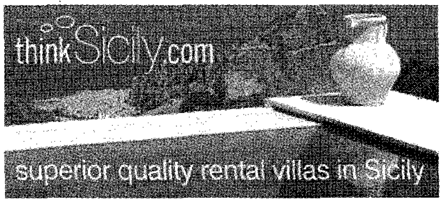

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the same time, not to be so loud that I might frighten her.

The moment I put on the brake, she stopped walking—and that was when I realized that she wasn't a woman. She looked up, and I could see it in everything about her: the way she stood, the darkness in her face, the heaviness. It was a boy, not a woman. Not a man, either, just a boy of eighteen or twenty, fairly thickset and not at all feminine. When he looked up at me, I saw the fear in his face, behind the mass of wet makeup and mascara, a fear that he wanted, but couldn't quite manage, to hide. "I'm O.K.," he said, but he stayed where he was, stock still, waiting.

"Where are you headed?" I said, switching off the ignition and trying to keep the surprise out of my voice.

"Home," he said. Then he mumbled something else that I couldn't make out.

"What was that?" I said.

He shook his head. He seemed desperate, though I wasn't sure if he was desperate to be helped or to be left alone—at least, not until he spoke. "I'll be fine," he said.

I knew then that he wanted to trust me enough to get him home safe and dry. I also knew that he didn't trust anybody, not right at that moment, anyway. "Well," I said, "I'm Bill Harley. I'm on my way home from a long run delivering molasses, and it's nearly Christmas, so I'm not going to leave you out here in the dark."

Something changed in him then. Maybe it struck him as funny that I was talking about molasses, but he seemed to soften. He moved closer to the cab and tried to see inside. "I'm going home," he said. "It's just down this road." He looked up into my face. "I'll be fine," he added, though he sounded less convinced than before.

"Oh, come on," I said. "Do yourself a favor. We'll get you home, and you can get cleaned up." I swung the passenger-side door open.

The boy nodded. I suppose he'd sized me up and decided it was worth the risk. Or maybe he was just past caring and the promise of shelter was more than he could resist. "All right," he said. "It's very kind of you."

I nodded, then waited while he climbed in. He had a bit of trouble with that, what with the dress and the sling-back shoes, which I assumed he wasn't used to, but finally he got himself settled and pulled the door shut. I looked at him for a moment in the golden light from the overhead, then I started the engine as casually as I could. "Well," I said, raising my voice so he could hear me above the noise. "Where are you headed?"

"Coaltown?"

I nodded and turned back toward the road. It was a good twenty miles to Coaltown, not just down the road, but I had to pass it on my way home anyway. "O.K.," I said.

"You know it?"

"I used to work there," I said. "Long time ago."

"Well, he said. "You'll not find it much changed. I guarantee you that."

"I don't suppose I will," I said, releasing the hand brake. As I did, I caught sight of the gash on his leg. It looked nasty, but the bleeding seemed to have stopped. There was dirt all over his legs and hands, dirt and blood dried into the mesh of his fish-net stockings. His face was badly bruised, as if someone had punched him several times. I turned back toward the road, but I knew that he'd noticed me looking at him.

"I'm all right," he said. "Just a few cuts and grazes."

I shook my head. "It's a bit more than that," I said.

He let out a short, hard laugh, as if I'd made some joke at his expense. "I suppose it is," he said—and I detected something in his voice, more of a drift than a slur, that suggested he might be on something.

"Well," I said. "It's none of my business. But I've got a first-aid kit in the box behind you." I tilted my head toward the back. "If you want to get yourself sorted out."

"I'm fine," he said. "But thanks, anyway." He shot me a quick glance, then looked away. "I've had worse."

"Really?"

"Rules of the game," he said. "It's not as bad as it looks. I just went to the wrong party." He glanced out at the side mirror. "I suppose it was a mistake, going for the Aileen Wuornos look." I had to think about that for a moment, before I remembered who he was talking about, and he must have seen the realization dawn in my face, because he laughed again, louder and more confident this time. "Don't worry, Bill," he said. "I didn't bring the gun."

I had to smile at that. "Well," I said. "There's a relief."

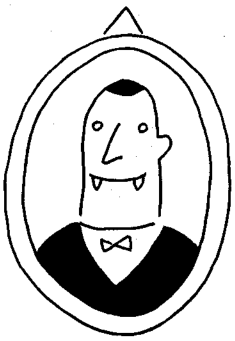
He laughed again, but this time his laughter was good-humored and warm, and I was suddenly glad that I'd stopped. "So," he said. "Where are you headed, Bill Harley?"

"Home," I said, and I realized that I didn't want to think about home, at least for the moment. I wanted to be out on the road still, out on the road on a winter's night, with no set destination, passing the time with someone I'd never see again.

"Ah, yes," he said. "Home." He dwelled on the word for the moment before moving on. "Soon be Christmas," he said.

"Not long." I looked over at him; he was watching me, attentive, taking me in, maybe searching for something that he thought I wanted to keep hidden—and I had an image of Caroline, of how she had watched me like that sometimes when she was younger, hoping for a clue to what lay behind the façade that she thought I was working so hard to maintain. Maybe that was what made me say what I said next, surprising myself, and the boy. I didn't say it very loudly, and I wasn't really speaking to him, but it was loud enough to be audible above the noise of the engine. "One last Christmas," I said. "Better make the most of it, eh?"

It wasn't what I'd intended to say, though I wasn't sorry I'd said it. Still, I had no wish to pursue the notion any further, now that it was out—and I think he understood that, because, after allowing just enough space for what I might say next, he let it go without another word, and we drove on in silence, staring out from our separate places into the sleety darkness, our faces filling with light from time to time as a car passed from the opposite direction. It was slow going, then, but the silence didn't bother me; if anything, it felt strangely comfortable, like having a passenger in the cab and being alone at the same time. After a while, though, the boy picked up the conversation, slipping casually into the kind of slow-moving, pointless talk that goes on between people of good will who don't know each other well: stuff about football—I was surprised by that, though I suppose I shouldn't have been—and some documentary he'd seen on television. It could have been anybody in the cab with me, to begin with at least, but then he started talking about other things, minor stuff about his school days mostly, only it was funny and good-humored, and all the time I knew he was really talking about something else altogether, some other story about himself that he wanted to tell, not out of need but because it was interesting. Like his memory of the school atlas that he'd been given in geography class—how he had loved the way the world was all mapped out, all the colors and lines and borders perfect and just, so that it looked like the kind of world it would be a pleasure to inhabit, an utterly fictional world where you could never be lost, because everybody and everything belonged somewhere. I enjoyed that, for as long as it lasted, partly because it felt new, to be driving along like this, talking to a boy in a dress and runny makeup, but also because he was such good company. When we finally reached the turn for Coaltown, he leaned forward in his seat slightly. "If you drop me here, that'll be fine," he said.



I shook my head. I didn't want to leave him in the dark, on another stretch of featureless road. "I'll take you to your door," I said. "It's no trouble."

"Thanks, Bill," he said. "But I'd rather walk from here. No offense." He looked over at me, and, even out of the corner of my eye, I could see that he was hoping he hadn't somehow insulted me.

"None taken," I said, but I turned off the main road and carried on a few hundred yards toward the coast before I stopped.

"Thanks," he said.

"Don't mention it," I said.

He put his hand on the door, as if to go, then he turned and smiled, not so much at me as at something that had just crossed his mind. "It's not how you think it is," he said. I felt uneasy, as if he were breaking some prearranged code and had started telling me a secret

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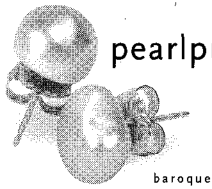

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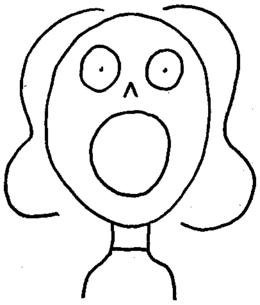
that I wasn't supposed to know. “I'm happy with how things are, most of the time,” he said, and it was as if he were talking to someone else, trying to persuade them that what he was saying was true. Someone else, or himself, or a little of both. “So that question in your mind,” he said. “You might as well forget it.”

I nodded, but I didn't say anything. I really didn't want to make something of it, even if there was a question in my mind, because it probably wasn't the question he thought I wanted to ask. I didn't need to know about his life, or what he did sexually, or what he wanted to do, or any of those things. I certainly didn't want to know what the wrong party had been, or how he had come by his cuts and bruises. Some part of me was curious about him, but it was his happiness that I was curious about—because I thought he wanted me to imagine him as happy, and I wondered why it mattered to him. Or maybe I was just surprised that he seemed to believe that happiness was possible—and probably that was why I asked him the question I thought he wanted to hear, because, even on such short acquaintance, I liked him and I wished him well, at least. It was a piece of shorthand, I suppose, for all the other questions, the ones about happiness and being alone and getting home safe. It was also nothing at all. “Do you know what you're doing?” I said.



The boy laughed. “Never,” he said, with a little too much emphasis. “But you have to pretend, Bill.” He regarded me for a moment. “If you don't pretend,” he said, “you're lost.”

I had no idea what he was talking about, but I understood anyway. He couldn't do anything else, was what he meant. He couldn't do anything different, and neither could anybody else. “Well,” I said. “You be careful now.”

He slid down off the seat and turned back toward me. “You, too, Bill,” he said. He'd said my name again, and I suddenly realized that I didn't know his. “Have a good Christmas,” he said.

“You, too,” I said. Then I slipped into gear, released the hand brake, and pulled away, leaving him there in the slow, dark sleet. I didn't look back through the side mirror so I didn't see what he did next, and it wasn't until I was some miles farther down the road that I realized that he hadn't wanted to talk about himself at all, but was just giving me something back, and I felt sorry not to have understood it at the time, but glad, too, because, out on the road, in the cold, any gift is better than nothing.

After I dropped the boy off, the weather cleared a little, and the last ten miles took next to no time. I liked that final stretch, the road going straight along the coast for a while, the water big and empty to the south, the fields and low hills above spotted with light here and there from farmsteads and faraway cottages. By the time I turned off and began climbing the rise toward home, the sleet had stopped altogether; a few miles farther, I came within sight of my own village, not much more than a row of houses straggling along a back road, a brief distraction on the way to somewhere else. The lights here always seemed dull and brownish in comparison with the fairy-tale silver of the lights I'd seen from the high road, and it struck me, sometimes, coming home late, that I knew the place too well. I knew all the stories. I knew what the people were doing behind those windows. I could see the abandoned dinner tables and the stone sculleries, the muddy boots on the doormat, the piles of newly opened letters on the sideboard, the silent men sitting in worn armchairs in the kitchen, watching television.

When I reached my own cottage, I parked the rig in the lay-by opposite and let myself in through the side gate, coming across the garden to the back door, which was always left unlocked. The house was silent, almost dark; the one lamp burning was in the dining room, a room we hardly ever used, preferring to eat in the creaturely warmth of the kitchen. I wasn't surprised that Sall was in there, though: that was where we kept the things that her real life was made from—the best china and the family albums and the framed pictures from what she probably thought were better days. I opened the back door and went through the kitchen as quietly as I could—quieter, those last months, than I'd ever been before, as if the promise of death had revealed a carefulness in me that I'd never suspected—and I found Sall sleeping in the big armchair by the fireplace, a magazine on the floor by her feet, an empty mug cradled in her lap. Asleep like that, unguarded, her head leaning heavily to one side, she looked old and tired, but at least the worry that usually haunted her face was gone, and, as I stood watching her, it struck me that she was dreaming. I knew she would be upset if she woke up and found that I'd come home while she was sleeping, but I stood a moment longer, watching her dream and wondering how she had spent the day, what she had thought about, what she had done. After a moment, though, I felt uncomfortable spying on her like that, and I walked back through to the kitchen, to let her rest.

It was colder than ever now, but the sky had cleared, and a bright moon had emerged from the clouds, cold and white in a pool of indigo sky right above the garden. I put the kettle on, then I stepped outside and stood on the patio, looking over the fields to the stand of trees and the long stone wall that I knew were just beyond, black and irrefutably solid in the darkness. It was almost completely silent: from time to time, a dog barked at the end of the road, or the odd gust of wind caught in the beech hedge by Sall's flower border; then, after a minute or so, the kettle began to sing quietly, and, as I felt the silence slipping away, I tried to capture it all, to drink it all in, before Sall woke up and I wasn't alone anymore. This was my life, these were the times when I was true: in these half hours here and there when I felt alone in the house, or those fleeting moments out on the road, when I opened a gate and crossed an empty farmyard, a stranger, even to myself, in the quiet of the afternoon. The best part of the day was getting up at dawn and going down to the cool gray kitchen, the dark garden waiting at the door like some curious beast strayed in from the fields, a casual attentiveness in the coming light that seemed ready to include me, as it did everything else, in a soft, foreign stillness. That was the best, because I knew Sall would stay in bed until after I left, whether she was awake or not—though times like tonight were almost as good. It had become more frequent of late, this coming home and knowing that Sall was asleep somewhere, the magazine she had been reading slipped to the floor, a mug of tea cooling on a side table. It felt like coming home to another house, a place full of secrets, a childhood still there, intact among the green shadows under the stairs. First love, too—though not for Sall, as it happened, even though I’d never known anyone else, or not in that way. No: if thirty years of marriage and bringing up a child had taught me anything, it was that through everything, through all the Christmases and birthdays, through all the mishaps and misunderstandings, almost nothing had been shared. Everything that happened had happened to us separately, and, afterward, in my own mind, it all had a strangely abstract feel: a marriage inferred from picture books and Saturday matinées, a love that didn’t quite materialize, a series of other lives that had involved me for a while then shied away, the way an animal does when you make the wrong move and remind it of what you really are.

The kettle was whistling now, and I thought to leave it, so that Sall would have to get up and turn off the gas. That way, I could pretend I hadn’t seen her sleeping. It felt too close, seeing her like that. It was as if I were breaking the rules we had worked for years to set up, a system of small courtesies and avoidances and slow, fluid conversations that ran for days, pieces of hearsay and local news passed back and forth over meals and cups of tea to cover the bewildered quiet that had fallen upon us. It was awkward sometimes, but it did work, and it was better than any of the possible alternatives. For a moment, I thought of the boy on the road and wondered if it would ever come to this for him, if he would ever come home and find someone he cared for, but no longer loved, asleep in an armchair. It was a tender thought, I suppose, but it wasn’t sad, or sentimental, and it had nothing to do with death. It was just a notion, passing through my mind, while I waited for the kettle to stop whistling.

Only it didn’t stop, and after a while I walked back inside and turned off the gas myself. At exactly the same moment, Sall came through, her eyes bleary, an odd, faraway look on her face. She seemed surprised to see me, as if she hadn’t heard the kettle at all but had just woken up in what she thought was an empty house—and it struck me, for the first time, how difficult it would be for her, having me die first.

“You’re back,” she said. It sounded like an accusation. She glanced at the clock, but she didn’t say anything else.

“It was a long run,” I said. “I just got in.”

She nodded. “I haven’t made you anything,” she said. “I didn’t know when you’d be finished.”

“It’s all right,” I said. “I’m not that hungry.”

She gave me a quick, scared look. “You’ve got to eat,” she said.

“I’ll have an omelette or something later,” I said. “I was just making coffee, if you want some.”

“I’ll make it,” she said. “You sit down. You’ve had a long day.”

I nodded, but I didn’t move. The door was still open, just enough that I could smell the cold outside, and I heard the dog barking—farther away now, it seemed, at the darker end of the road that ran past our house and into the hills, past the golden lights of farms and dairies and narrow sheep runs through the gorse, where snow was probably beginning to form—real snow this time, not the cold sleet I’d driven through in the woods where I met the boy. For a split second—no more—I wanted to get back in the rig and drive on, up into the darkness, into the origin of the approaching blizzard, just to be alone out there, the way that boy had been alone in the woods. Then, with Sall watching me curiously, and perhaps fearfully, I let go of that thought and went through to the living room, where the curtains were already drawn and the night was nothing more than a story to be told by a warm fire, with the radio humming quietly in the background, so that the world felt familiar and more or less happy, like the future that seemed possible when you didn’t think about dying, or the pastel-colored maps in a childhood atlas that you couldn’t help but go on trusting, even when you knew that they no longer meant what they said. ♦

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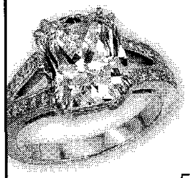

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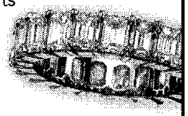

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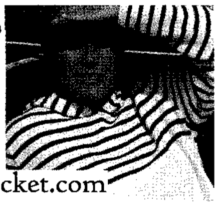

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THE CRITICS

BOOKS

VAST DESIGNS

How America came of age.

BY JILL LEPORE

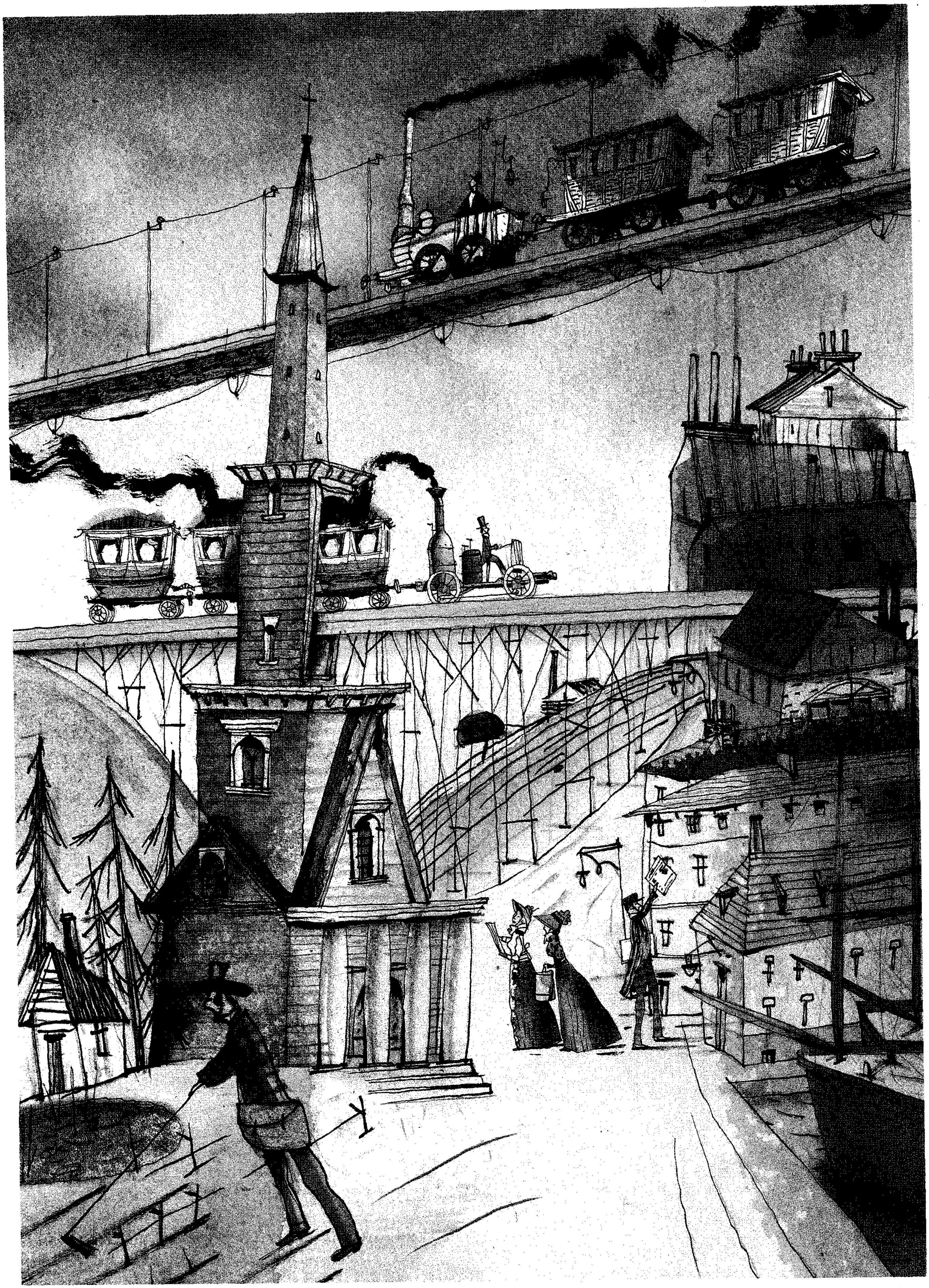
In February, 1844, Ralph Waldo Emerson rhapsodized about young America, "the country of the Future," as "a country of beginnings, of projects, of vast designs and expectations." That May, Samuel F. B. Morse telegraphed the message "What hath God wrought," from Washington to Baltimore, overthrowing, in one electric instant, the "tyranny of distance." The next month, a railroad from Boston reached Emerson's home town of Concord, Massachusetts. Less than a year later, in the spring of 1845, by which time the Boston railroad had snaked its way to Fitchburg, forty miles west, and telegraph wires had begun to stretch across the continent like so many Lilliputian ropes over Gulliver, Emerson's eccentric friend, the twenty-seven-year-old Henry David Thoreau, dug a cellar at the site of a woodchuck's burrow on a patch of land Emerson owned, on Walden Pond, about a mile and a half outside town. (Thoreau had lived in Emerson's house, as his handyman.) He borrowed an axe, and hewed framing timbers out of white pine. "We boast that we belong to the Nineteenth Century and are making the most rapid strides of any nation," Thoreau later wrote, from the ten-by-fifteen-foot cabin he built over that cellar, at a cost of twenty-eight dollars and twelve and a half cents. He used the boards from an old shanty for siding. He mixed his own plaster, from lime (two dollars and forty cents: "that was high") and horsehair (thirty-one cents: "more than I needed"). He moved in on the Fourth of July, 1845. Before winter, he built a chimney from secondhand bricks, and reckoned it an improvement, but he didn't think the same could be said for the nation's "rapid strides" and "vast designs." The telegraph? "We are in great haste to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas; but Maine and Texas, it may be, have nothing important to communicate." The postal system? "I never received more than one or two letters in my life . . . that were worth the postage." The nation's much vaunted network of newspapers? "We are a race of tit-men, and soar but little higher in our intellectual flights than the columns of the daily paper." Banks and railroads? "Men have an indistinct notion that if they keep up this activity of joint stocks and spades long enough all will at length ride somewhere, in next to no time, and for nothing; but though a crowd rushes to the depot, and the conductor shouts 'All aboard!' when the smoke is blown away and the vapor condensed, it will be perceived that a few are riding, but the rest are run over."

Daniel Walker Howe's ambitious new book, "What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848" (Oxford; $35), chronicles every development that Thoreau despised, many that he admired, and a great deal about which the man in Walden's woods cared not one whit. Between 1815 and 1848, the United States chased its Manifest Destiny all the way to the Pacific; battled Mexico; built thousands of miles of canals, railroads, and telegraph lines; embraced universal white-male suffrage and popular democracy; forced Indians from the South and carried slavery to the West; awaited the millennium, reformed its manners, created a middle class, launched women's rights, and founded its own literature. "What Hath God Wrought" is both a capacious narrative of a tumultuous era in American history and a heroic attempt at synthesizing a century and a half of historical writing about Jacksonian democracy, antebellum reform, and American expansion.

Howe's book is the most recent installment in the prestigious Oxford History of the United States. This would not be worth mentioning except that the book that was initially commissioned to cover this period, Charles Sellers's "The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846," was rejected by the series editor, the late, distinguished historian C. Vann Woodward, and it is Sellers against whom Howe argues, if with a kind of gentlemanly diffidence. (Oxford did publish Sellers's book, in 1991, just not as part of the series.) Sellers, a historian at Berkeley, claimed that the greatest transformation of the first half of the nineteenth century—indeed, the defining event in American and even in world history—was no mere transformation but a revolution, from an agrarian to a capitalist society. "Establishing capitalist hegemony over economy, politics, and culture, the market revolution created ourselves and most of the world we know," Sellers wrote.

Sellers's energetic, brilliant, and strident book may not have reached readers outside the academy—perhaps Woodward anticipated this—but among scholars it enjoyed a huge influence, not least because "The Market Revolution" was published just after many of the nation's best historians had written essays sounding urgent calls for synthesis in American historical writing. During the nineteen-sixties and seventies, historians had produced longer and longer monographs on smaller and smaller subjects. A decade in the life of a town. A year in the life of a family. Dazzling studies, many of them, but pieces of a puzzle that no one had been able to put together. "The great proliferation of historical writing has served not to illuminate the central themes of Western history but to obscure them," Bernard Bailyn complained, in 1981, in his presidential address to the American Historical Association. There followed similar, heartfelt laments by Eric Foner

STEPHANE JORISCH



Boats, trains, and telegraph wires—changes in transportation and communication—had surprising social and political effects.

"I don't know if it's me or the alcohol talking, but I'm having trouble standing up and I think I might vomit."

("History in Crisis"), Herbert G. Gutman ("The Missing Synthesis"), and Thomas Bender ("Making History Whole Again"). Sellers's paradigm seemed to offer an answer; he had dumped all the pieces out of the box, and put them together, joining decades of meticulous empirical research about Western farmers, Eastern bankers, Southern slaves, artisans, immigrants, politicians, everyone.

Before the market revolution: Americans grew food and made things for themselves or to barter with neighbors; they were humble but happy, rallying around "enduring human values of family, trust, cooperation, love, and equality." After: they grew food and made things to sell, for cash, to cold, unfeeling, and distant markets; they were frantic, alienated, untrusting, competitive, repressed, and lonely. "Inherent and ongoing contradictions between capitalist market relations and human needs" plagued the nation, as Sellers had it, and plague us still. For leading the anti-market struggle against the "business class" and attacking paper money and credit, Andrew Jackson served as Sellers's hero, especially for having vetoed, in 1832, the charter for the Second Bank of the United States. But Old Hickory, and democracy, proved no match for the tyrannical business minority of bankers, merchants, and strivers, whose capitalist machinations made the poor poorer; the middle-class smug, pious, and bourgeois; and the rich richer. As Thoreau put it, "A few are riding, but the rest are run over."

The literary scholar Perry Miller once said that "Walden" is "a manifesto of Yankee cussedness." Sure, but, even if high-school sophomores forced to wade through "Walden" miss it, Thoreau can be very, very funny. "I have thought that Walden Pond would be a good place for business," he wrote, mischievously. "It is a good port." His experiment was, of course, not a business but an anti-business; he paid attention to what things cost because he tried never to buy anything. Instead, he bartered, and lived on twenty-seven cents a week. At his most entrepreneurial, he planted a field of beans, and realized a profit of eight dollars and seventy-one and a half cents. "I was determined to know beans," he writes in a particularly beautiful and elegiac chapter called "The Bean-Field." He worked, for cash, only six weeks of the year, and spent the rest of his time reading, writing, hoeing beans, picking huckleberries, and listening to bullfrogs trumping, hawks screaming, and whip-poor-wills singing vespers. "Mr. Thoreau is thus at war with the political economy of the age," one reviewer commented, after "Walden" was published, in 1854. But Thoreau wasn't so much battling the market revolution as dodging it, "not to live in this restless, nervous, bustling, trivial Nineteenth Century, but to stand or sit thoughtfully while it goes by."

What Thoreau tried to escape, historians studying his America have found in every sparrow's fall. Sellers's was the thesis that launched a thousand dissertations; evidence of the market revolution seemed to be everywhere; it seemed to explain everything. In "The Market Revolution Ate My Homework," a thoughtful essay published in *Reviews in American History* in 1997, the historian Daniel Feller observed that "a monograph that presupposes a market revolution will certainly discover one." His caution went unheard.

So it is a rare and refreshing kind of heresy that Daniel Walker Howe, who studied briefly under Sellers at Berkeley in the nineteen-sixties, and who is best known for his 1979 book, "The Political Culture of the American Whigs," refuses to use the term "market revolution" in his grand synthesis. (Signalling his quarrel with the other recent sweeping interpretation of this period, Sean Wilentz's pro-Jackson "The Rise of American Democracy," Howe dedicates his book to the memory of John Quincy Adams, Jackson's political nemesis, and avoids using the phrase "Jacksonian America," on the ground that "Jackson was a controversial figure and his political movement bitterly divided the American people.") Howe has three objections to Sellers's thesis. First, the market revolution, if it happened at all, happened earlier, in the eighteenth century. Second, it wasn't the tragedy that Sellers makes it out to be, because "most American family farmers welcomed the chance to buy and sell in larger markets," and they were right to, since selling their crops made their lives better. Stuff was cheaper: a mattress that cost fifty dollars in 1815 (which meant that almost no one owned one) cost five in 1848 (and everyone slept better). Finally, the revolution that really mattered was the "communications revolution": the invention of the telegraph, the expansion of the postal system, improvements in printing technology, and the growth of the newspaper, magazine, and book-publishing industries.

Howe offered an early version of his critique of Sellers at a conference held in London in 1994, in which he demurred, "What if people really were benefitting in certain ways from the expansion of the market and its culture? What if they espoused middle-class tastes or evangelical religion or (even) Whig politics for rational and defensible reasons? What if the market was not an actor (as Sellers makes it) but a resource, an instrumentality, something created by human beings as a means to their ends?" Sellers summarized Howe's argument as "Market delivers eager self-improvers from stifling Jacksonian barbarism" as against his own "Go-getter minority compels everybody else to play its competitive game of speedup and stretch-out or be run over." Fair enough. "Where Howe's assumptions suggest that I undervalue capitalism's benefits and attractions," Sellers continued, "my assumptions suggest that he underestimates its costs and coercions." Again, fair enough. But Sellers attributed these "warring assumptions" not to different evidence, methods, theories, or strategies of analysis but to the two historians' different values. Howe writes from "within the bourgeois middle-class culture," Sellers scoffed, while his own (presumably more Waldenesque) life had taught him that "relations of capitalist production wrench a commodified humanity to relentless competitive effort and poison the more affective and altruistic relations of social reproduction that outweigh material accumulation for most human beings." In other words, money talks, but it can't buy you love.

"Rather than love, than money, than fame, give me truth," Thoreau demanded. One question woke him up every morning, as regularly as the screech of the whistle of the Fitchburg locomotive that chugged by his cabin, on tracks built just up the hill from Walden Pond: Were all these vast designs and rapid strides worth it? In truth, no. "They are but improved means to an unimproved end."

Howe, quoting Samuel Morse quoting Scripture (Numbers 23:23), asks more or less the same question: "What hath God wrought"? Howe's debate with Sellers is provocative and important because the answer to this question ought to explain, or at least illuminate, the historical relationship between capitalism and democracy. The so-called consensus historians of the nineteen-forties and fifties argued that the seeds of capitalism "came in the first ships" and were planted on American soil by the earliest Colonial settlers. With this, Sellers and Howe disagree, but differently. For Sellers, capitalism is the imported kudzu strangling the native pine of democracy. For Howe, capitalism is more like compost, feeding the soil where democracy grows.

Consider two major nineteenth-century events: the religious revival known as the Second Great Awakening and the temperance movement. In 1776, about one in six Americans belonged to a church; by 1850, that number had risen to one in three. In roughly the same period, the amount of alcohol that Americans drank dropped from more than seven gallons per adult per year to less than two gallons (about what it is today). If you were to look at a map, and chart these changes, you'd see that they follow the course of the nation's growing network of canals and railroads. The canal or railroad arrives, and the people join churches; the people join churches, and they drink less. How do historians account for these correlations? The answer, at first, seems obvious: preachers spread the Gospel; the same boats and trains that carried cash crops from farms to towns brought revivalist ministers from towns to farms. But, once they got there, why did anyone listen to them? Sellers argues that the heightened religiosity and teetotalling of nineteenth-century Americans can be attributed to "class needs for work discipline, social order, and cultural hegemony." (In factory towns, some bosses required their workers to go to church.) The market needs industrious, reliable, orderly workers; the market produces them. Howe disagrees. "Evangelical religion was not foisted upon the industrial working classes," he writes. Factory workers and farmers joined churches, and stopped drinking, for the same reason that their middle-class counterparts did: they were persuaded by evangelism's embrace of egalitarianism, and "its trust in the capacities of ordinary people."

Or consider sex. In agrarian America, as Sellers conjures it, "unsegregated nudity, casually exposed genitalia, and the sounds and smells of coition were commonplace in crowded cabins." The market revolution replaced this earthy carnality with unrelenting prudishness: restrictive clothing, private bedrooms (with mattresses!), revivalist ministers' militant campaigns against masturbation, and "an unprecedented denigration of eroticism." In the eighteen-twenties and thirties, the Reverend Sylvester Graham, a founder of the American Vegetarian Society and the inventor of the eponymous cracker, argued that, with a proper (flesh-free) diet, lust could be almost entirely extinguished. Sellers acknowledges that the "radical redefinition of gender" associated with these developments eventually led to a powerful movement for women's rights, but his grim conclusion is that "female power was won at the cost of female as well as male libido." The market needs workers who don't think about sex all day long; the market produces them.

Not so fast, Howe counters: "What we think of as Victorian prudery can also be seen as a clumsy effort to make men regard women as something other than sexual objects." The first half of the nineteenth century witnessed a wholesale transformation of manners, a politeness revolution. Sellers, no champion of courtesy, sniffs at this kind of thing as "middle-class mythology," but Howe thinks manners matter. (One of the chief merits of "What Hath God Wrought" is Howe's earnest effort, and great success, at chronicling changes of all sorts, from rates of childhood mortality to the gross national product, from the frequency of bathing to the firepower of cannons.) In short, "ladies first" wasn't all bad. "Although polite culture put women on a pedestal to avoid challenging the prerogatives of men," Howe writes, "it represented in important respects an advance over the subjugation of women common in premodern society."

It's tempting to agree with Sellers that what really lies between these two interpretations is "values." Sellers thinks that poor, drunk, lusty, impious eighteenth-century Americans were freer, and happier, than their wealthier, sober, prim, devout nineteenth-century grandchildren; Howe thinks it's the grandchildren who were better off. They both concede, at length, that not everyone was better off; the people who were really "run over" in Jacksonian America were enslaved African-Americans, who toiled in the cotton fields that spread across the continent; Native Americans, who were forced from their land and marched from the South to the West, under Jackson's brutal policy of "Indian removal"; and Mexicans, who suffered grievously during Polk's war against Mexico in 1846-48, and even more in its aftermath. Thoreau decided that voting was too cheap and feeble a response to these grotesque atrocities, inflicted in his name, by his own government: "Cast your whole vote, not a strip of paper merely, but your whole influence." He refused to pay his taxes. In the summer of 1846, he left his cabin and went to jail. As he later explained in "Resistance to Civil Government" (now known as "Civil Disobedience"), prison was "the only house in a slave-state in which a free man can abide with honor." When Emerson asked him why he had gone there, Thoreau is said to have answered, "Why did you not?"

Howe's most effective challenge to Sellers's claims about the kudzu of capitalism is his story about what women gained and lost in the transformation of America. Howe argues that, in the end, the market nourished democracy, giving women more, rather than fewer, choices. He closes his book not with the conclusion of the Mexican-American War, in 1848, but with the women's-rights convention held in Seneca Falls that same year, at which Elizabeth Cady Stanton led in drafting the "Declaration of Sentiments": "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal. . . . The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her." Howe relies on decades of prodigious scholarship in women's history—arguably, a field of inquiry that constitutes a revolution in its own right—to tie his thesis together. And what do women gain and lose? If men lose the family farm but gain the right to vote, women lose their reputation as the more passionate sex but gain the capacity to demand suffrage. At least for women, Howe insists, "economic development did not undercut American democracy but broadened and enhanced it."

Abigail Kelley's life is an example. Born in Massachusetts in 1811, she became a Grahamite in the eighteen-thirties. She gave up coffee, tea, meat, and alcohol, and ate a lot of Graham crackers. In 1832, she saw William Lloyd Garrison lecture, and became an abolitionist. She joined the Female Anti-Slavery Society of Lynn, Massachusetts, where her contributions consisted, at first, of stitching and selling pincushions with mottoes such as "Oh sisters! sad indeed's the thought / That in our land poor slaves are bought!" In 1837, she wrote to her sister, "My variety is made up in watching the progress of moral enterprises—Grahamism and Abolition and Peace." Three years later, she was the first woman nominated to an office of the American Anti-Slavery Society. In protest, almost three hundred male conventioneers left the meeting, to form a rival abolition society, in which women could neither vote nor hold office. Not long after, at a meeting of the Connecticut Anti-Slavery Society, when Kelley stood up to speak, the chairman declared:

> No woman will speak or vote where I am moderator. It is enough for women to rule at home. It is woman's business to take care of the children in the nursery; she has no business to come into this meeting and by speaking and voting lord it over men. Where women's enticing eloquence is heard, men are incapable of right and efficient action. She beguiles and blinds men by her smiles and her bland winning voice. . . . I will not submit to PETTICOAT GOVERNMENT. No woman shall ever lord it over me. I am Major-Domo in my own house.

As Kelley later explained, for her, and for many women, work within the abolitionist movement, trying to free the nation of slavery's chains, persuaded her that "we were manacled *ourselves*."

The women's-rights movement, which grew out of the antislavery movement, which grew out of revivalism, which was made possible by advances in transportation and communication, is the strongest evidence for the interpretive weight that Howe places on social, cultural, and religious forces as agents of change, and makes "What Hath God Wrought" a bold challenge both to Sellers, who is more interested in economics, and to Wilentz, who is more interested in politics. Howe's synthesis does what a synthesis is supposed to do: it brings all these things together. Economic changes separated men's work from women's, and made "work" a place that men went to and "home" a place where women stayed. Revivalist ministers celebrated women's moral purity, and drew women into reform movements, including abolitionism, which sowed the seeds for Seneca Falls. "The major disputes, excitement, and violence of American history between 1815 and 1848 did not involve either a struggle to attain white male democracy or the imposition of a new 'market revolution' on subsistence family farmers," Howe argues. "Not the affirmation of democracy itself, that 'all men are created equal,' but attempts to broaden the legal and political definition of 'men' aroused serious controversy in the United States during these years."

In August of 1846, while Thoreau was still living in his cabin, the Concord Female Anti-Slavery Society held its annual meeting on the banks of Walden Pond. Speakers, including Emerson, gathered at Thoreau's cabin. In 1837, Emerson's wife and Thoreau's mother and sisters had been among the founders of the society, who maintained, "The truth is, men have faltered and have failed in their duty touching this matter of slavery."

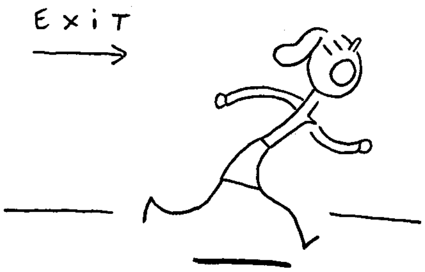
This was an unusual incursion. Thoreau was an ardent abolitionist, but one senses that he preferred jail to a cabin crowded with visitors. If Walden was Thoreau's flight from the market economy, it was, equally, a flight from women, from domesticity, from family life. He walked to town, nearly every day, to dine with friends; his mother often cooked for him. "I think that I love society as much as most," he wrote, "and am ready enough to fasten myself like a bloodsucker for the time to any full-blooded man that comes in my way." But he loved his solitude (a friend of his once said that he "imitates porcupines successfully"), and he hated hearing news. "Often, in the repose of my mid-day, there reaches my ears a confused *tintinnabulum* from without. It is the noise of my contemporaries." Above all, he cherished his manly self-sufficiency (even though he carried his dirty laundry to Concord for his mother to wash): "Who knows but if men constructed their dwellings with their own hands, and provided food for themselves and families simply and honestly enough, the poetic faculty would be universally developed?"

Emerson lost patience with his peculiar friend. When Thoreau died, in 1862, Emerson delivered an ambivalent eulogy, regretting Thoreau's limited compass: "Instead of engineering for all America, he was the captain of a huckleberry party. Pounding beans is good to the end of pounding empires one of these days; but if, at the end of years, it is still only beans!" In much the same spirit, he had once written a note, never sent: "My dear Henry, A frog was made to live in a swamp, but a man was not made to live in a swamp. Yours ever, R." ◆

BRIEFLY NOTED

Tomorrow, *by Graham Swift (Knopf; $23.95).* Throughout his career, Swift has made good use of stories that unfold backward, working toward revelations about the past. But the strategy misfires badly in this novel, narrated by a woman lying awake next to her sleeping husband and mentally talking to her sixteen-year-old twins about a secret whose revelation, the next day, will change their lives. The problem is partly that the secret turns out to be unmomentous, but also that it is used as a device to lead us through the history of a marriage—student love in the sixties, career choices, deaths of a cat and a parent—that has little narrative impetus of its own. Presumably, Swift is trying to celebrate ordinariness, but he seems to have been unsure how to do it.

Gifted, *by Nikita Lalwani (Random House; $23.95).* Rumi Vasi, the teen-age daughter of Indian immigrants in Wales, lives a life of double estrangement, marked as an outsider both by her ethnicity and by her precocity. Yet her isolation is generated less by the culture surrounding her than by the pressures of family. Her mother, determined not to allow Western morals to corrupt her daughter, tells her, "Only white people have sex"; her father insists on a punitive schedule of tutoring and test-taking under strict conditions—freezing temperatures, isolation—meant to enhance learning. Sent to Oxford at fifteen to study mathematics, Rumi begins to question the course that has been determined for her, and to seek freedom at any cost. Lalwani's début novel imbues the melodrama of teen-age rebellion with humor, but underneath the wry observations runs a corrosive anger that brings the book to a discordant close.



Lawrence and Aaronsohn, *by Ronald Florence (Viking; $27.95).* Florence chronicles the birth of the modern Middle East by narrating the intersecting lives of two remarkable men. The portrait of T. E. Lawrence—a deeply British romantic who, despite his talent as a tactician, was unable to deliver on his promises to the Arab fighters he had led during the First World War—is persuasive if not particularly original. Florence is clearly much more taken with the less celebrated Aaron Aaronsohn, a brilliant agronomist instrumental to the survival of early Zionist settlements in Palestine. He became a spy for the British, at great risk to himself and his family. (His sister was tortured by Turkish officers who suspected her, correctly, of assisting in the espionage.) Florence skillfully blends geopolitical history and cloak-and-dagger tales but, regrettably, includes no detailed portrait of any Arab figure; the Arabs serve, instead, to inspire or frustrate the designs of others, whether British, Jewish, or Turkish.

Lost Genius, *by Kevin Bazzana (Carroll & Graf; $28).* Bazzana, the author of an incisive study of Glenn Gould, follows up with the extraordinary story of a pianist much less famous but even more eccentric, Ervin Nyiregyházi. Born in Budapest in 1903, he was a prodigy whose early life was a series of effortless triumphs. But, after he moved to America, his career quickly foundered, thanks to unscrupulous managers and his own immense stubbornness. He slept rough in New York and, later, lived in seedy hotels in Los Angeles and San Francisco. Nyiregyházi, who called himself "a fortissimo bastard" and claimed to be "addicted to Liszt, oral sex, and alcohol," married ten times and had countless other conquests (including, probably, Gloria Swanson). Rediscovered late in life, he made recordings that are controversial: his interpretations were distinctive but his technique was shaky. Bazzana painstakingly re-creates a life lived mostly in obscurity and judiciously separates greatness from vainglory. The result is a balanced portrait that also often reads like a parable about the artistic temperament.

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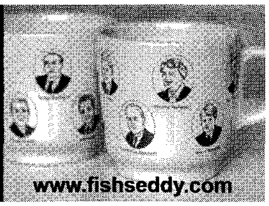

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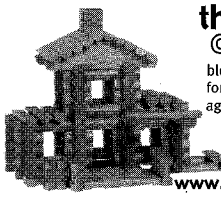

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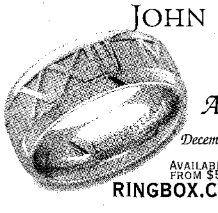

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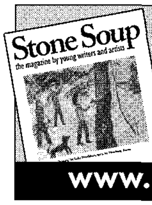

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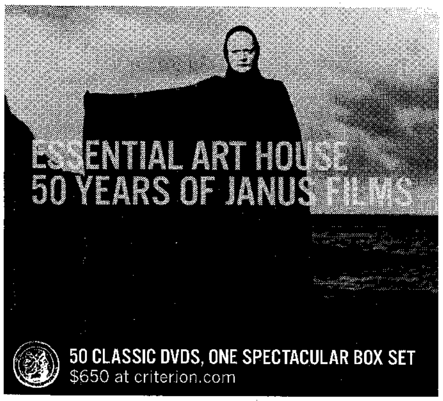

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POP MUSIC

SAVAGE BEAUTY

Animal Collective's feral sound.

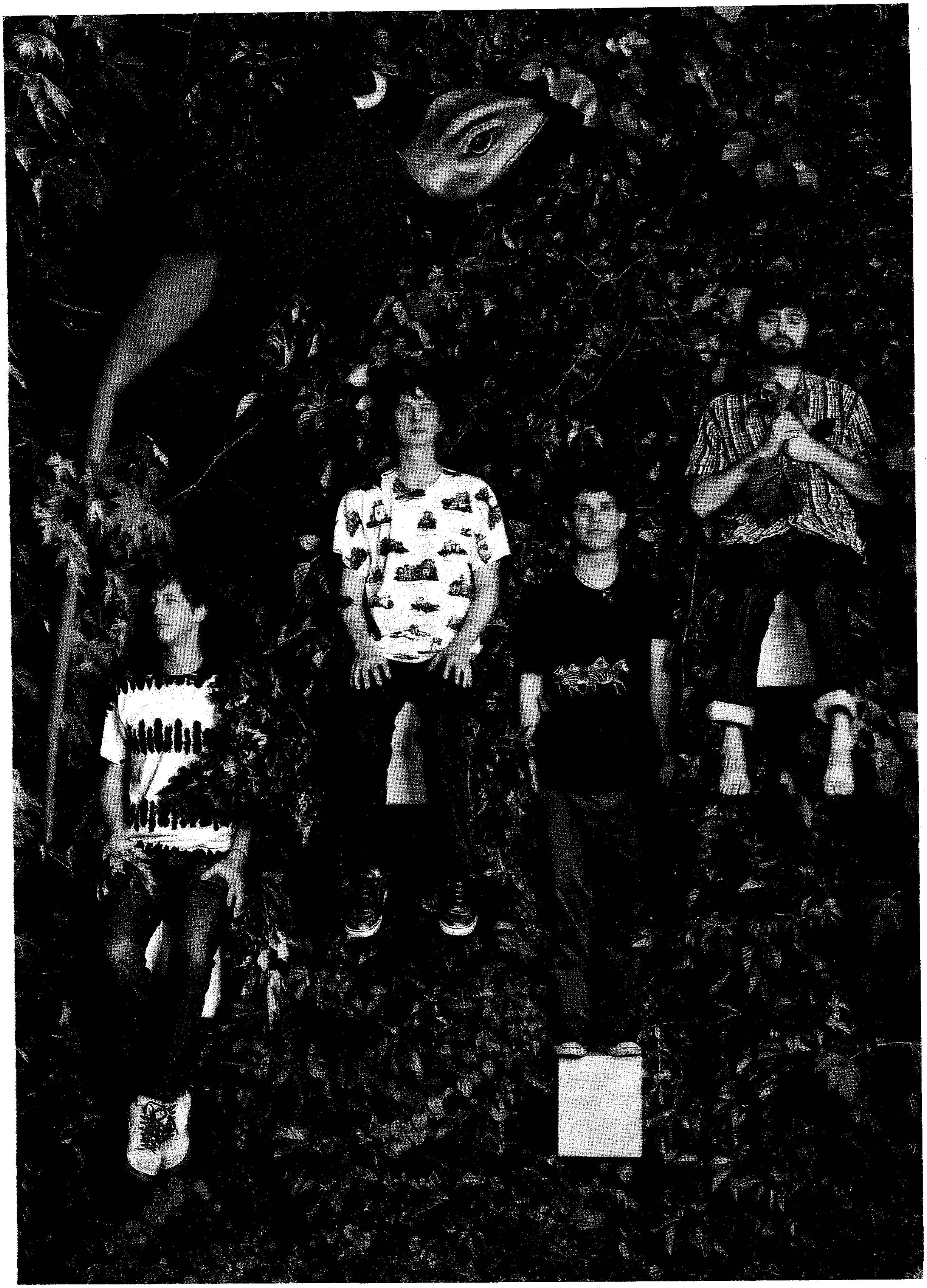
BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

Animal Collective, a four-man band based in New York City, has never seemed particularly interested in comfort or clarity. The group's new album, "Strawberry Jam," which was released last month, has been described as more "melodic" and "coherent" than its previous seven albums. This is more or less true, but you are likely to be frustrated if you expect to hear lots of songs with distinct verses and choruses. Those who have little appetite for chaos might ease their way into the world of Animal Collective by listening to "Person Pitch," a shimmering collection of songs by Panda Bear, one of the band's two singers, which could be demos by Brian Wilson that have been cut up and rearranged. Animal Collective defies predictability, and is routinely called "avant-garde" and "psychedelic," even though the music is not particularly confrontational and the lyrics can be concrete. (Any hardworking city dweller will understand the insight, from "Peacebone," a song on "Strawberry Jam," that "the other side of takeout is mildew on rice.") The band specializes in moments when one noise collides with another, creating music that might be impossible to make intentionally. When the sound catches the light, the flash is so brilliant that you don't mind the absence of more conventional pleasures.

I first heard the band in 2000, when it was a duo called Avey Tare and Panda Bear. (Names are another convention that Animal Collective toys with: each of the band's members goes by an alias, and they have collaborated with one another, in groupings of different sizes, under various titles. In 2002, the musicians settled on the name Animal Collective, much to the relief of record-store sales staff everywhere.) An employee of Other Music, a boutique store in downtown Manhattan, handed me a CD by the duo called "Spirit They've Gone, Spirit They've Vanished." It came in a silk-screened black paper sleeve, and the music sounded improvised, though nothing like jazz or anything else that I could imagine being performed live. Synthesizers were manipulated and made to honk, guitars were scratched (with what, I couldn't tell), and drumbeats fell here and there. The vocals were painfully high-pitched and reminded me a bit too much of free time in an echoey third-grade classroom. Yet the album bristled with sonic color and motion; it was as though I was listening to the musical equivalent of a painting by de Kooning, who could trigger a riot of associations with a few deft strokes, a hatching of pink, and some blank space.

Avey Tare (Dave Portner) and Panda Bear (Noah Lennox) had been collaborating since high school with two other musicians, Geologist (Brian Weitz) and Deakin (Josh Dibb), who eventually joined the band. The group's two most recent albums, "Sung Tongs" and "Feels," were well received and helped Animal Collective gain an audience that is surprisingly large, given that the band doesn't give you much to sing (or even hum) along to, and that it is not always clear where one song ends and another begins. Is that sound of a bell being assaulted by a fork—I'm guessing here—just the introduction? Or is it the point of the song? Will there be actual singing, or only this looping growl? Or, wait, maybe that growl is not a human voice at all, but rather the headstock of a guitar being massaged to produce a flicker of feedback.

After "Feels" was released, in 2005, the band developed the kind of ardent following associated with the Grateful Dead or, more recently, Radiohead; audience recordings of the band's performances are posted on the Internet soon after each show. In June, the band appeared before a crowd of three thousand, on an outdoor stage at the South Street Seaport. Deakin was absent (he's taking the year off), and, to my surprise, the band, instead of per-



The band's members: Deakin, Panda Bear, Avey Tare, and Geologist. Photographed in Brooklyn by Ethan Levitas.

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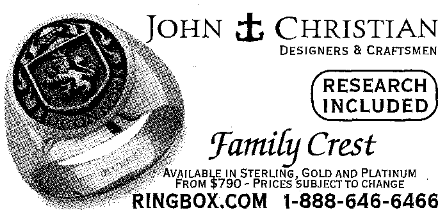
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forming songs from "Strawberry Jam"—the entire album was leaked online later that month—played mostly unrecorded material and songs from its back catalogue. But the fans seemed unfazed. Evidently, they had been downloading recordings of previous live shows; many seemed to know even the new pieces by name.

The band's performance last month at Webster Hall was equally idiosyncratic. It began with an unusual but delightful d.j. set of what might loosely be described as dance music. Green and white laser beams raked the crowd, and the bass frequencies were turned up high, causing the floor to vibrate gently. The most arresting piece was ten minutes long. Anchored by a steady kick drum, it featured a cantering horn section playing what could have been a fragment from a ska record, and, every few minutes, what appeared to be a recording of a jet plane taking off. The sound would grow louder, almost to the point of causing pain, and then abruptly disappear, each time to huge cheers.

The band performed in front of a bank of vertical light boards, which flashed the colors of the rainbow. Geologist, who is bearded, stood stage right, wearing a caving headlamp and surrounded by electronic equipment; to his left stood Avey Tare, who is dark-haired and boyishly handsome and was wearing a striped rugby shirt. Panda Bear stood stage left, in front of another console of knobs and next to a few drums. The band was flanked by two skeletons dressed in frilly ball gowns. The music began with a strong pulse and the thicket of noise that is Animal Collective's signature sound: whooshes, screams, and a shifting cascade of acoustic effects.

Avey Tare started to dance—hopping on one leg and slowly completing a circle that took him to the rear of the stage and back to the front—and then to sing, his voice, electronically altered so that it was several octaves lower than normal, registering as a monstrous flop of sound. Avey Tare is less mellifluous than Panda Bear; his singing consists mostly of high-spirited hectoring, though he occasionally breaks into falsetto. Yet the music was crackling and bright, grounded by a low thrum. Animal Collective's most faithful fans may have recognized some of the songs, but, though I had listened to the albums and the recent live recordings, I was stumped.

The band never stopped playing, but segued from piece to piece, at one point launching into a version of "Peacebone," the opening track on "Strawberry Jam" and one of the band's more traditional numbers. Out of the murk, a steady throb emerged. Panda Bear started drumming to a series of electronic pips and gurgles, and Avey Tare began hopping and singing, "A peacebone got found in the dinosaur wing" and, later, that "a jugular vein" was "leaking mostly interesting colors." Much of the song was delivered in a friendly but loud speaking voice, though the chorus, which is very brief, was sung in falsetto: "It's not my words that you should follow, it's your insides." This line—which suggests a useful way of understanding the band—was followed by loud shrieks, samples of someone saying "bonefish," and a swirl of increasingly harsh sonic muck.

Fifteen minutes later, the sound stopped and Avey Tare approached the front of the stage. Nothing appeared to be wrong, though with this kind of music it's almost impossible to know what belongs and what doesn't. "I'm sorry," he said to the audience. "It's too bassy. I just don't know what's going on. Those last two songs should have been better." The crowd, which hadn't seemed particularly distressed, was taken aback. The storm of sound started up again, but the mood in the room had cooled. When the set ended, the crowd stomped and hooted for a while, in the hope of an encore. After about ten minutes, the houselights went up. The crowd left, some fans booing as they went. (The next day, the comments section on the Web site Brooklynvegan.com, a faithful chronicler of live shows in the New York area, was filled with complaints about the concert.) It seemed unfair of the band to admit making a mistake while refusing to play an encore to make it right. In retrospect, though, the concert was in keeping with the band's aesthetic. Animal Collective needn't have apologized: it isn't depending on rousing anthems to get it through the night. It wants to make music that is serendipitous and wild, and imperfection is necessarily part of that process. ♦

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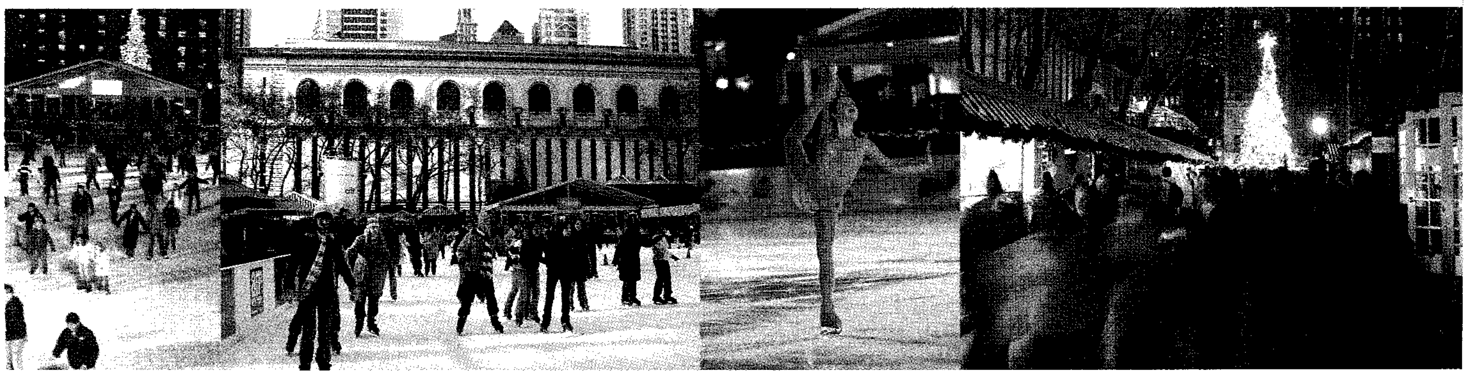

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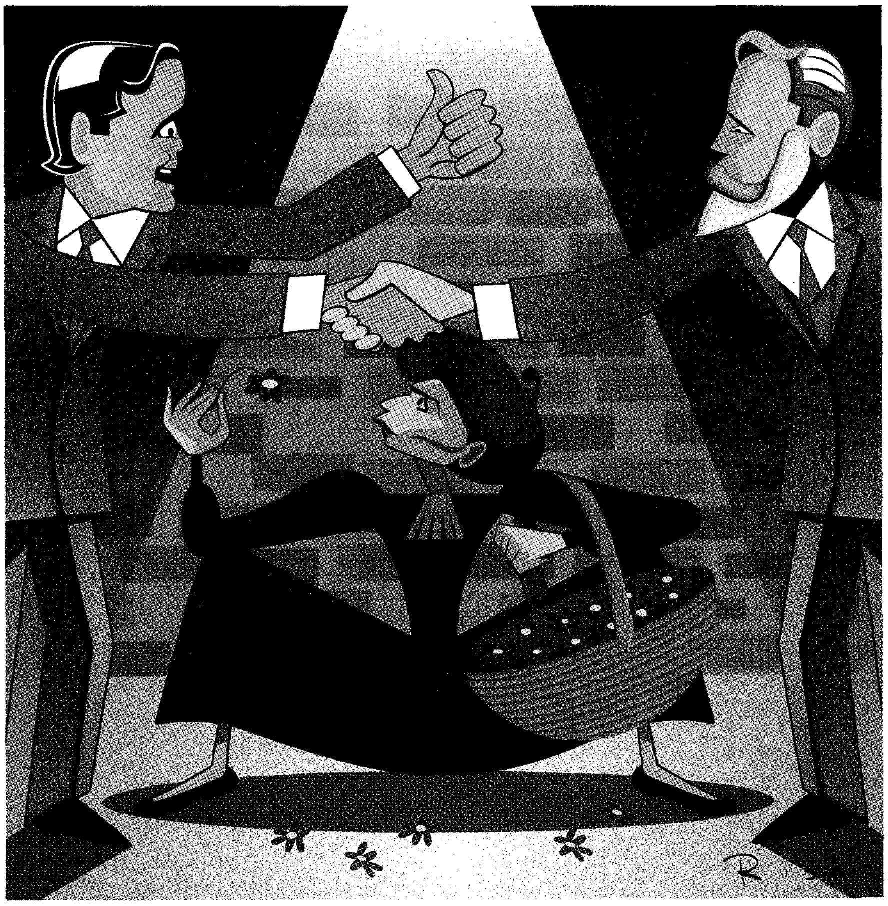
LOVE FOR SALE

A revival of "Pygmalion."

BY HILTON ALS

In 1885, on his twenty-ninth birthday, George Bernard Shaw slept with a woman for the first time. The woman's name was Jenny Patterson; she was a close friend of his mother's, and not much younger. "I was an absolute novice," Shaw later wrote in his diary. "I did not take the initiative in the matter." Although Shaw found the experience "potent," it also, as his biographer Michael Holroyd notes, "unShavianized him." Sex and its attendant emotional intimacies, Holroyd adds, "robbed him of his authority and the hard discipline of work through which he was trying to re-create himself." Indeed, as time went on Shaw began to believe that passion was best expressed through letters to the beloved, which is to say through the imagination.

As he backed off from direct engagement with the opposite sex, his view of women in his work began to seem remarkably consistent. Cleopatra, Joan of Arc, Major Barbara, Mrs. Warren's daughter, and Eliza Doolittle: in all these characters, Shaw showed us women who were engaged in a spiritual quest, fighting to rise above the limitations of their flesh. Nowhere in Shaw's enormous body of work did this theme play out more dramatically than in his 1932 book, "The Adventures of the Black Girl in Her Search for God." Shaped like a Christian parable, this strange book is less a story about conversion than a polemic with narrative pluck. In it, the black girl—she has no other name—makes her way through her native Africa, searching for God's presence, for an embodiment of his beneficence. She doesn't find what she's looking for. Instead, she marries a white Irish socialist and bears his children. One gets the sense that the socialist is a stand-in for Shaw himself, who discussed politics and economics, and their relationship to women's lives in an industrial society, repeatedly, in such eccentric prose works as "The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism" (1928) and in plays ranging from "Major Barbara" (1905) to "Heartbreak House" (1919). In "Heartbreak House," for instance, the heroine, Ellie Dunn, announces that she will marry not for love but to close a deal. A certain Mr. Mangan has spared her father financial ruin; she must honor his generosity by giving herself to him and making a home for him. Ellie is a post-Ibsen, post-Wilde creation—a Nora who tries not to escape a doll's house but to build one, a Cecily without the arch modernist stance. Unlike Ibsen's Nora—who must free herself from her neurotic relationship to money in order to learn how to exist—Shaw's female protagonists are never really members of the leisure class. Rather, they're deeply pragmatic, grounded women who are rarely possessive of the men they're attracted to, because they know that those men can't be had—at least, not as husbands.



Jefferson Mays, Claire Danes, and Boyd Gaines in George Bernard Shaw's classic.

ROBERT RISKO

Certainly, it doesn't take Eliza Doolittle, in Shaw's 1913 play, "Pygmalion" (now in revival, in a Roundabout Theatre Company production, at the American Airlines), long to figure out that love would stand in the way of who she wants to be. Not that love has ever played much of a role in her tattered life. Eliza (Claire Danes)—undernourished and filthy, peddling flowers near Covent Garden—is well aware that she is living on the bottom rung of Britain's rigid turn-of-the-century class system. Nevertheless, she has the mind of an entrepreneur, and she knows that she's her own best product; she believes that she has something to offer the world. But, like any product, she needs an expert packager to make her shine.

As the play begins, it's raining, and some workers and upper-class ladies waiting for a cab are stranded under a portico at St. Paul's Church, near the corner where Eliza peddles her wares. Everything looks beautiful and grim, like an Edward Gorey drawing. (The brilliant décor is by Jonathan Fensom, and the moody, evocative lighting is by Jason Taylor.) Pretty soon, a bystander notices a man loitering nearby, eavesdropping and taking notes. The stenographer in question is Professor Henry Higgins (Jefferson Mays). Higgins is in the business of phonetics, and the delight he takes in identifying people through their speech is physically palpable. But that doesn't mean that he's interested in those people's lives. For the professor, humans are a species for scientific study. He is intrigued by their language, not by the emotions they express with it.

Although Eliza is offended by Higgins's rudeness, she doesn't let that deter her. She uses the money he tosses her as a tip that rainy night to take a cab to his relatively posh digs, armed with a proposition: she will pay him for elocution lessons. She wants to talk properly, she says, because "I want to be a lady in a flower shop stead of selling at the corner of Tottenham Court Road. But they won't take me unless I talk more genteel." Higgins is flattered enough by the proposal to agree. But, as he tells his friend and fellow-phonetician Colonel Pickering (Boyd Gaines), he is taking Eliza on as a student for his own purposes. "What is life but a series of inspired follies?" Higgins asks, rhetorically. "The difficulty is to find them to do. Never lose a chance: it doesn't come every day. I shall make a duchess of this draggletailed guttersnipe. . . . Yes: In six months—in three if she has a good ear and a quick tongue—I'll take her anywhere and pass her off as anything."

Higgins's housekeeper, Mrs. Pearce (Brenda Wehle), is against the idea. Solidly working-class, she knows how an upper-class man's whims can affect a poor girl with ambitions, especially once he tires of her. Eliza has no point of reference for Higgins's behavior, nor does she have any idea how a duchess lives. Still, the flower girl and her Pygmalion set about reshaping her into something more acceptable. But what, exactly, is an acceptable shape? Not unlike Shaw's black girl, Eliza, it turns out, is looking for a God, or, at least, a father, since she's more or less unparented. (Her ne'er-do-well dad, played by Jay O. Sanders, has little use for her.)

It's rather touching that in this production, which is so full of language and reflections on its relationship to class, Danes is most affecting when she's relegated to saying absolutely nothing. Trained as a dancer, she is skilled at pantomime. She knows how to tell a story and how to reveal her character's thought process through gesture. But when she has to use Shaw's words to express Eliza's pain or desire she goes flat; it's as though she had nothing internal to draw on to match Shaw's witty, sharp, and decidedly unpsychological language. Danes makes Eliza sound shrill when she should sound desperate. She impersonates Eliza without living her. When the poor flower girl feels lost, Danes clearly still feels like a star. In "My Fair Lady," the 1964 musical film version of "Pygmalion," Audrey Hepburn was able to play up the comic absurdity of Eliza's first foray into polite society, but Danes can't quite make the role her own—neither its comedy nor its pathos.

Fortunately for David Grindley, the show's inventive and solid director, he has Jefferson Mays to work with. It's difficult to make a prig funny, but in his early scenes Mays does so expertly. The trouble is that Mays, having established Higgins's various idiosyncrasies, then recedes. Presumably in order to demonstrate how love has changed Higgins—how confused he is when he tries to rely on feelings, rather than on logic—Mays hangs back more and more, especially after Eliza decides to escape Higgins's tutelage and strike out on her own. Mays needs to figure out how to establish his character in a more active way, to be less decorous in relation to the text. When he portrayed Charlotte von Mahlsdorf in the 2004 Tony Award-winning one-man show "I Am My Own Wife," he was hindered by the mannerisms of his cross-dressing character. In "Pygmalion," he has replaced those tics with the prissy concerns of a schoolmaster. Perhaps ultimately it's not Higgins that Mays is playing but Shaw himself: the man whose interest in women didn't always leave room for the demands of love. ♦

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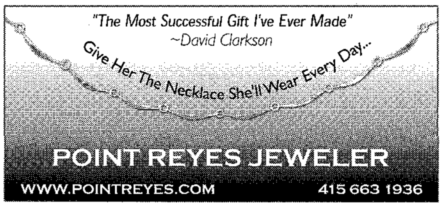
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THE CURRENT CINEMA

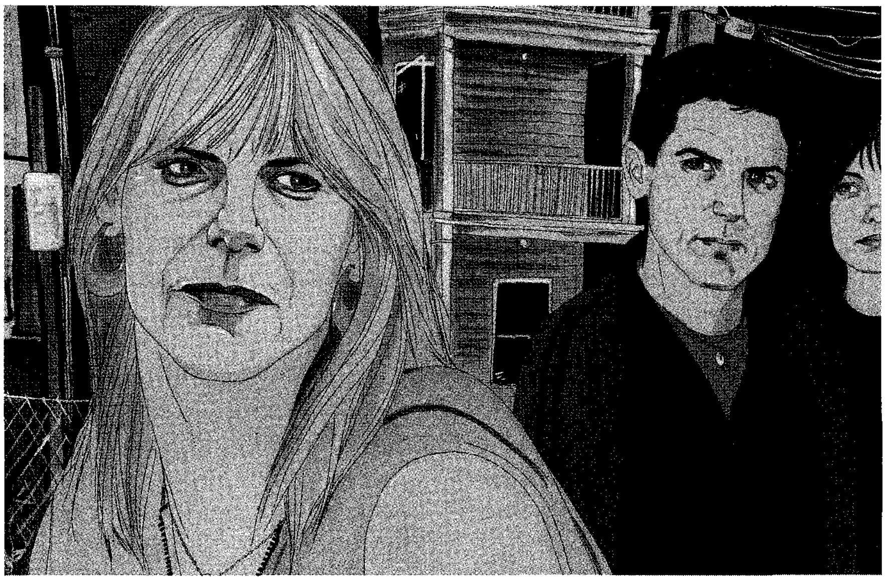
BAD RELATIONS

"Gone Baby Gone" and "Before the Devil Knows You're Dead."

BY DAVID DENBY

How is it possible that the kind of squalor and dissolute behavior that would be intolerable in our own lives and the lives of our friends is often fascinating, even enjoyable, in a movie? The cynical answer is that our enjoyment is based on relief: this mess is happening to someone else, not to us. Yet it can't be as simple as that. After all, a moviegoer's imaginative life is voracious. From day to day, we may be as cautious and calculating as possums, but at the movies we want to see everything, including the worst. We may even feel a tiny sense of duty to see the worst, though the pleasure derived from looking at meanness is likely more aesthetic than moral. If we sense, *This is right, this is the way things are*, we know that we're in the hands of an artist. I have trouble sitting through reality-TV shows, but I could spend all day watching Amy Ryan (from "The Wire") play the world's most awful mother in "Gone Baby Gone." Ryan's character, Helene McCready, a blond near-looker of about thirty-five, is the kind of hardened screwup who teases the squares in her family when they disapprove of her sleeping around and snorting so much coke. Her baby? Someone else will look after it. Anyway, it's no business of theirs. Even after her four-year-old girl is snatched from the house one night, Helene remains defiant. Ryan leads with her jaw, and she gives her foul-mouthed lines rhythm and bite. She understands that an egotistical sinner always puts other people on the defensive. She's viciously alive, and her wayward mother is a fresh, unprecedented creation on the screen.

Ben Affleck, in "Gone Baby Gone," his first directorial effort, intermittently works as an artist, too. The movie is based on a genre thriller by Dennis Lehane, who wrote the much finer novel "Mystic River," which served as the basis of the Clint Eastwood classic from a few years back. Affleck has not been cowed by the success of the earlier movie; he digs even deeper into sordidness than Eastwood did. "Gone Baby Gone" is set in the Boston that the postwar boom passed by—the sour streets of working-class Dorchester, where the light is gray and shapeless people sit all day long on the steps of wood-frame houses. It's a neighborhood, as Lehane and Affleck present it, in which children are in danger of neglect or far worse. Affleck, who wrote the screenplay with Aaron Stockard, wants us to feel the dinginess of the place, as well as the endurance of the men and women who live there, and he mixes in among the actors and the professional extras some local people—including steady drinkers with red, swollen cheeks at a corner bar. The nonactors stand out; they have a guarded, almost hostile self-sufficiency—their faces yield nothing to the camera. We don't get the same kind of pleasure from them that we get from Amy Ryan, but they give the movie a sullen authority.



Amy Ryan, Casey Affleck, and Michelle Monaghan in Ben Affleck's directorial début.

LARA TOMLIN

Ben Affleck's younger brother Casey stars as Patrick Kenzie, a smart Dorchester tough who has pulled himself together to become a private investigator and neighborhood guardian. With his girlfriend, Angie (Michelle Monaghan), Patrick searches for people who have disappeared. When Helene's daughter is kidnapped, they scour Dorchester watering holes, hassle the drug dealers, and get heavily embroiled with some angry Boston police officers who are obsessed with protecting children. The movie turns into a complicated and emotional thriller, but Casey Affleck doesn't overplay his hand. He's lean, with a pale, unmarked face that suggests meagre experience of the world, and at first he looks too young for the part. Most of the time, he mutters in a thick (occasionally impenetrable) street accent; his Patrick is reserved, and people underestimate him. But Affleck uses his untested appearance to dramatic effect. When someone challenges Patrick, he comes back hard with a bottom-dog snarl and a string of threats. From one scene to the next, "Gone Baby Gone" has a bracingly surly tone. The insults fly, and Ben Affleck and the actors make them sound like normal speech. It's as if everyone in Boston had a large block on his shoulder, or some nasty secret to conceal.

Both the police and the thugs tell Patrick and Angie that if a kidnapped child isn't found within the first few days she's probably dead. Yet the couple persists in looking, and the movie turns into a convoluted and, to my mind, largely improbable detective story, with Patrick developing into a supersleuth who steps into claustral, threatening places and takes enormous chances. Ben Affleck probably respects Lehane the genre writer (there are five books with Patrick Kenzie as the hero) more than he should. He also has some way to go before he becomes a good director of action. A night scene in which the child is supposed to be exchanged for money is shown several times, from different points of view, with quick flashes in the dark, but exactly what happens isn't clear in any version. Affleck does best in sustained, intense passages of dialogue in which he can get the actors to dramatize contradictory impulses—the mixed motives and desires springing from long-buried pasts. Ed Harris, as a Louisiana-born police detective with an elegant goatee and burning eyes, gives one of his most fervent performances—his cop is so determined to eradicate evil that he commits evil. The movie is held together by the sickened sense that children are in danger. It's not just the women but also the men who can't stop talking about kidnapped children, abused children, murdered children. The unconvincing genre conventions in "Gone Baby Gone" are at odds with its authentic, lived-in atmosphere, but no one can say that Affleck hasn't looked into the depths, and the movie ends on a resonantly ambiguous note: are the rights of motherhood absolute if the mother is an incorrigible waster?

In Sidney Lumet's furious and entertaining little morality play, "Before the Devil Knows You're Dead," two men hard up for cash—Andy (Philip Seymour Hoffman), a payroll manager at a Manhattan real-estate company, and Hank (Ethan Hawke), his dim-witted kid brother—decide to knock over a jewelry store in Westchester. They know the store's layout; they know how much value in diamonds and cash is likely to be sitting there on a Saturday morning. How could they not know? The store belongs to their parents. But there's no downside, Andy says. An elderly friend of their mother's will be tending the store that morning, and, after the robbery, the boys will fence the jewels, and their parents' losses will be made good by an insurance company. We already know, however, that none of this will happen as Andy says—that the robbery will be a disaster—because the bungled job is shown near the beginning of the movie, and the planning session is a flashback. Lumet, working with the playwright Kelly Masterson's original script, has structured the events in an unusual way: again and again, the movie reaches a climactic moment, then jumps back a few days to lay out the story from the point of view of one character or another. When the climactic moment is reached a second time, the plot moves forward a bit, only to jump back once more, and so on. Despite the oscillation between past and present, "Devil" is so feverishly acted that it feels as if it were always hurtling into the future. Finally, near the end, the filmmakers stop backpedalling and rush through a series of increasingly violent acts in which the two men, trapped by their mistakes and their nauseating guilt, fall apart. "Devil" is devoted to the chaos unleashed by a single terrible idea. The fractured time scheme brings out the unsurprising but still enlightening lesson that crime should be left to the professionals, and that greed humbles smart-asses like Andy, who think they're invulnerable.

In part, the jewelry-store caper has Oedipal roots—Andy, it turns out, feels that he has never had the love of his father (Albert Finney) and is acting out some sort of convoluted revenge. He's also trying to do his hapless but good-looking brother in, even as Hank is doing *him* in by sleeping with his wife (Marisa Tomei). Lumet, now eighty-three, was around when both Arthur Miller's contentious family plays and live TV drama were at their peak (Lumet directed hundreds of shows), and this movie, with its savage competitions between brothers and between generations, has the feel of yesterday's dramaturgy. Yet he makes it work. While shooting his movies, Lumet grabs his actors and shakes them into giving more and more. Moving the camera in close, he pitches the performances as high as he can. In this case, his bullying panache feels right. If the material had been underplayed, or done as cool, sly satire, its moral and psychological patterns might have seemed obvious and trite. But with Andy laughing cynically and grinding Hank's ego to bits, and Hank so terrified that he can't stop trembling, the story of two reckless brothers becomes a volatile farce about schmucks on the loose—an old man's malicious joke about the universality of folly. Even Albert Finney, as the father, in his righteous fury after the crime, is a kind of comic monster. We can enjoy the mayhem without feeling sorry for any of them. ♦

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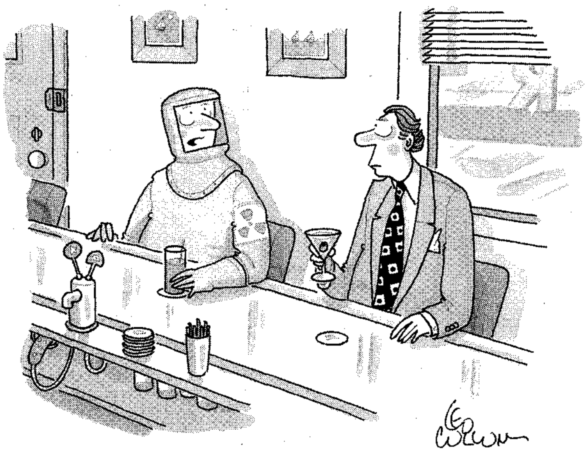
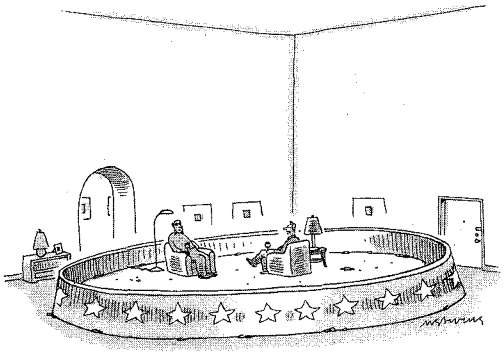
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Danny Shanahan, must be received by Sunday, October 28th. Finalists in the October 15th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the November 12th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"Ever have the feeling you forgot to turn something off?"
Preston Thomas, Chicago, Ill.



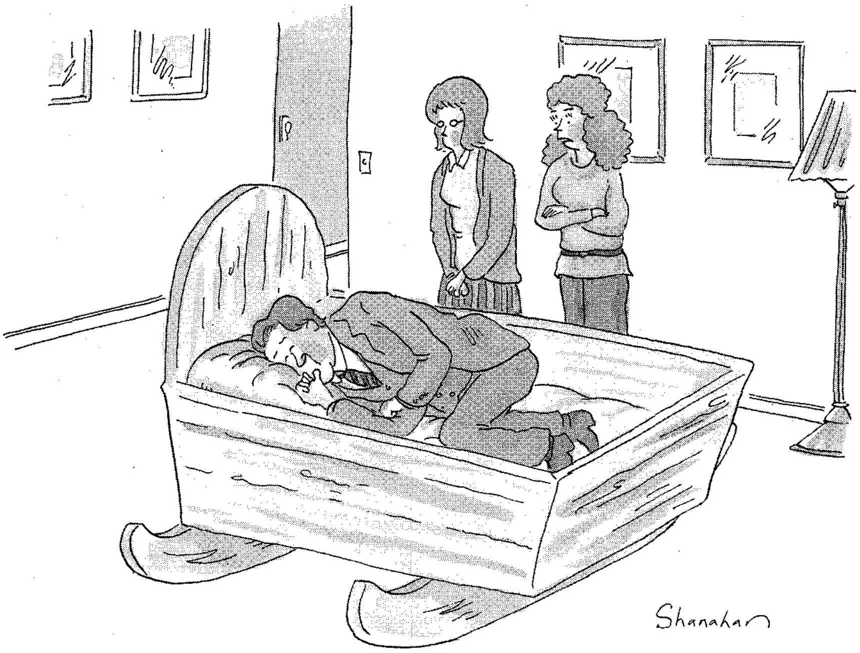
THE FINALISTS

"Welcome to the greatest living room on Earth!"
Lynn Tudor, New York City

"My wife will be here any moment. She's loading herself into the cannon as we speak."
Elizabeth Ruelas, New York City

"The people who lived here before had lions."
Richard Chisolm, Baltimore, Md.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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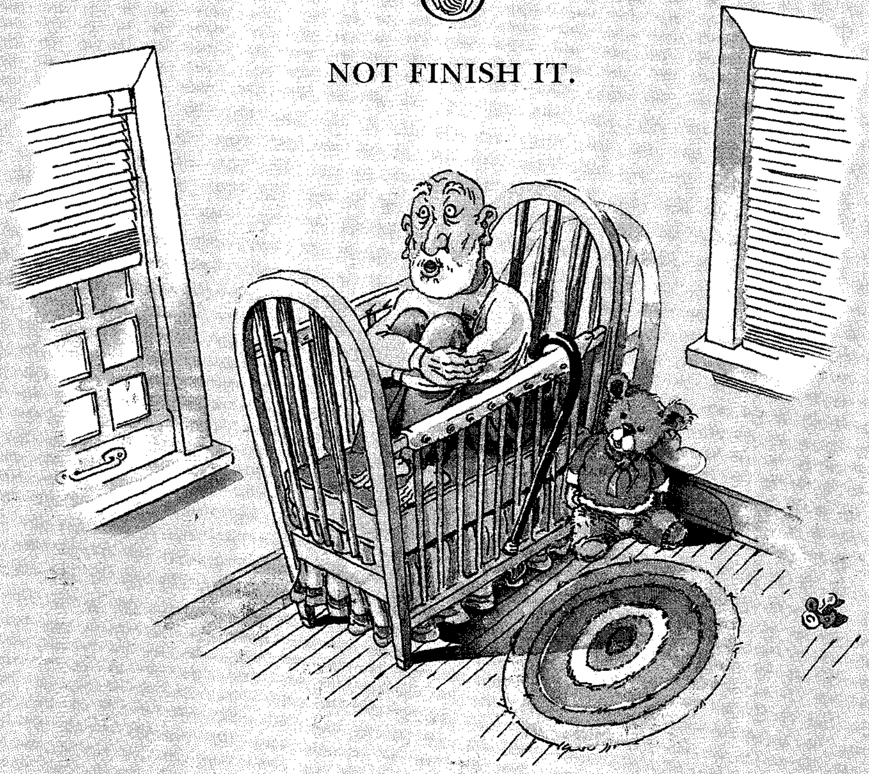

People tend to have a rosy view of their retirement savings. "I'll live off my pension." "I've got equity in my house." "The older you get, the cheaper it is to live." But these innocent assumptions can be quickly shattered. Luckily, Allstate has a few ideas on how America can start getting ready:

1. EXAMINE SOCIAL SECURITY.
Americans will not be able to rely solely on Social Security for a comfortable retirement. In the future, it's projected to cover an increasingly small percentage of the average retirement. There's debate as to whether it should be repaired or replaced. But what's clear is we need to reform Social Security now.

2. BOOST RETIREMENT PLAN ENROLLMENT.
Companies should continue looking for ways to encourage employee participation in 401(k) plans. One proven way to increase retirement savings is through company matches. Another is automatic enrollment—employees are signed up for savings plans when they join the company, unless they specifically opt out.

3. INCREASE PERSONAL SAVINGS.
Ultimately, everyone is responsible for their own retirement. It's why we support laws that reward people for saving. **Tax-advantaged savings vehicles like annuities and IRAs are two examples of products that can help allay Baby Boomers' biggest fear: living to see the well run dry.**

When planning for retirement, it's time to realize that no one is going to take care of us unless we start taking care of ourselves.

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